

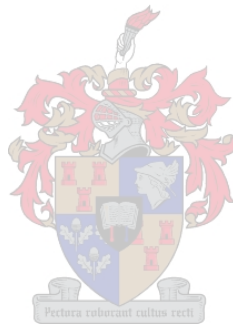
**Cultural evolution & genre: an investigation of three graphic narratives
of the South African Border war (1975–1988)**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Magister in Fine Arts in the Department of Fine Arts, University of Stellenbosch

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

Signature:

Date:

Abstract

Cultural evolution & genre: an investigation of three South African graphic narratives of the South African Border war (1975-1988)

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This study analyses three South African graphic narratives in the context of culture evolving in the Darwinian sense. It is deemed necessary to consider evolutionary theory in such a study of graphic narratives as it considers the development of culture as resulting from a process of evolution akin to natural selection. Special attention is paid to the theory of memetics, in the field of evolutionary epistemology, and its proposal to model cultural evolution. While this model relies on evolutionary theory, the development of culture is seen as evolving separately from biological evolution.

This evolutionary perspective on culture is combined with the concepts of discourse and genre in social semiotics and media studies to investigate the changes in the depiction of the Border war in South African graphic narratives. As such this study focuses on the strategic viewpoint of cultural evolution, the role of memes in genre and its interaction with the evolution of discourse. This approach is offered as a useful method to analyse cultural artefacts.

Keywords

evolutionary epistemology, natural selection, cultural evolution, meme, discourse, genre, graphic narrative, photo-comics, Bitterkomix, Border war

April 2006

Opsomming

Kulturele evolusie & genre: 'n ondersoek van drie grafiese verhale van die Suid-Afrikaanse Grensoorlog (1975-1988)

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Hierdie studie ontleed drie Suid-Afrikaanse grafiese verhale in die konteks van kultuur wat evolueer in die Darwinistiese sin. Dit word belangrik gereken om evolusieteorie in so 'n studie van grafiese verhale in ag te neem aangesien die ontwikkeling van kultuur as die resultaat van 'n proses van evolusie, verwand aan natuurlike seleksie, geag word.

Spesiale aandag word geskenk aan die teorie van meme, in die veld van evolusie-epistemologie, en dié teorie se voorstel om kulturele evolusie te modelleer. Terwyl so 'n teorie op evolusieteorie steun, word die ontwikkeling van kultuur beskou as 'n afsonderlike proses van natuurlike seleksie.

Hierdie evolusienêre perspektief op kultuur word verenig met die konsepte van diskoers en genre in sosiale semiotiek en media studies om die veranderende uitbeelding van die Grensoorlog in Suid-Afrikaanse grafiese verhale na te vors. Sodanig fokus hierdie studie op die strategiese oogpunt van kulturele evolusie, die rol van meme in genre en die interaksie met die ontwikkeling van diskoers. Hierdie benadering word aangebied as 'n waardevolle metode om kulturele artefakte te ontleed.

Sleutelwoorde

evolusie-epistemologie, natuurlike seleksie, kulturele evolusie, meme, diskoers, genre, grafiese verhaal, photo verhale, Bitterkomix, Grensoorlog

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Glossary of terms

Afrikaner nationalism: In this study Afrikaner nationalism refers to the cultural identity of white South African Afrikaners that includes “a strong identification with Afrikaans as a public symbol of its ‘nationality’, with South Africa as its only home and with indigenous or local forms of cultural or artistic expression – new attachments that were manifested alongside older ones such as an adherence to the Reformed faith, an insistence on racial exclusivity, and a rejection of *gelykstelling* or social levelling” (Giliomee 2003: 356). Afrikaner nationalism as a political expression is generally associated with the emergence of apartheid in South Africa, which resulted from the influence of several factors, such as “the problems of industrialization... and the determination of the Afrikaner to obtain political dominance” (Unesco 1972: 168). Commenting on racism in Afrikaner society, Breytenbach (1971: 145) notes that “discrimination is embedded in the tribe, is the *sine qua non* of its existence”.

Artefact: Artefacts may be broadly defined as “anything made by human workmanship” (Garmonsway 1965: 36). This definition may be too inclusive, however. If culture is understood as a non-genetic evolutionary process, artefacts may be considered as “an aspect of objectification, consisting in the material forms taken by this process” (Miller 1994: 399). In this study, artefacts are considered to be the visual products of the process of cultural evolution. See ‘*cultural evolution*’.

Cultural evolution: The term cultural evolution generally refers to “the proposition that all human cultural systems are related by descent to a common ancestral culture” (Durham 1990: 188). It is from this proposition that theories of cultural evolution propose to model the transformation of culture, which is described as a process of Darwinian evolution. In this view cultural evolution is considered as a second system of heritable variation, to a large extent evolving separately from biological evolution. The theory of cultural evolution that defines a hypothetical unit of cultural transmission as a meme is the focus of this study (Blackmore 1999). See ‘*meme*’.

Culture: Culture is defined here after Boyd and Richerson (1985: 33) as “information capable of affecting individuals’ phenotypes which they acquire from other conspecifics by teaching or imitation”. This definition distinguishes between cultural information, which is socially transmitted by teaching or imitation, and genetic information, which is generally transmitted by sexual reproduction. In this way cultural evolution is considered as a second system of heritable variation (Durham 1990). While this definition suggests possible methods of cultural transmission, it may be that cultural information is transmitted in other ways. Blackmore (1999) focuses on imitation as the main method of cultural transmission in order to distinguish the transmission of cultural information from other forms of learning that may have a strong genetic basis, such as imprinting and classical and operant conditioning. Premack and Premack (1994: 352) hold that human culture is distinguished from animal culture by the uniquely human phenomenon of pedagogy, which they describe as when “the novice, as in the case of imitation, observes the model; but now the model returns the observation, not just observing, but judging and correcting the novice when he or she fails to conform to a standard”. *See ‘cultural evolution’.*

Discourse: Discourse is defined here as “socially constructed knowledges of some aspect of reality” (Van Leeuwen 2005: 94). The phrase ‘socially constructed’ implies that discourses are bound to specific social contexts. Foucault (1969: 131) notes that discursive practice is bound to “a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic are, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function”. I consider discourse in terms of Dawkins’ (1989: 197) “co-adapted stable set of mutually-assisting memes”. Discourses are considered as influencing the production of works of genre (Van Leeuwen 2005). *See ‘genre’.*

Evolution: Evolution may be defined as “the genealogical connection among all earthly organisms, based on their descent from a common ancestor, and the history of any lineage as a process of descent with modification” (Zimmer 2001: x). Darwin’s (1902)

theory of evolution by natural selection proposes to explain the causes of descent with modification. *See 'natural selection'.*

Evolutionary epistemology: In the current argument evolutionary epistemology is defined as “a naturalistic approach to epistemology, which emphasizes the importance of natural selection in two primary roles” (Bradie & Harms 2004). Firstly, evolutionary epistemology relates the biological evolution of cognitive systems to the appearance of culture, and associates “the way in which natural selection has shaped us humans as thinking beings to the kind of knowledge claims that we would make” (Ruse 1995: 109). Secondly, evolutionary epistemology leads to theories that consider the transformation of scientific theories and culture in general to be analogous to the process of evolution by natural selection (Durham 1990). *See 'evolution' and 'natural selection'.*

Genotype: The term genotype refers to “the genetic constitution of an individual organism” (Wilson 1975: 585). The genotype of an organism is then the collection of its genetic information, encoded in DNA, and is distinguished from its phenotype. *See 'phenotype'.*

Genre: The term genre is generally used to group similar texts together, and may be defined as the “patterns/forms/styles/structures which transcend individual art products, and which supervise both their construction by artists and their reading by audiences” (Ryall cited in Lacey 2000: 132). In other words, genres operate both as templates for artists and as frameworks for the audiences’ reception. The conventionalised nature of generic patterns may be described as “the codification of discursive properties” (Todorov 1990: 18), and genres are described as being subject to discourse. *See 'discourse'.*

Graphic narrative: Graphic narratives may be defined as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence” (McCloud 1993: 9). The phrase ‘pictorial and other images’ refers to the texts, symbols and illustrations used in graphic narratives

(Kannemeyer 1998). The term 'graphic narrative' aspires to negate the negative connotations often associated with the synonymous term 'comics', and its definition widens the focus of studies on graphic narratives.

Natural selection: Darwin's (1902) theory of evolution by natural selection proposes to explain the processes involved in the descent with modification of organisms. These processes may be considered as the heredity, variation and selection of genetic information (Cziko 1995). The theory of evolution by natural selection benefited from its synthesis with genetics (Huxley 1942). *See 'evolution'.*

Meme: A meme is a hypothetical unit of cultural transmission, analogous to a gene, and may be defined as "a unit of information that is conveyed from one brain to another during cultural transmission" (Feldman 2001: 3058). Dawkins (1989: 192) offers the following examples of memes: "tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches". The term meme is closely synonymous to the terms 'concept' and 'idea' (Mayr 1997), and its distinguishing feature may be the particle nature of cultural evolution it proposes to model.

Phenotype: The term phenotype refers to "the observable properties of an organism as they have developed under the combined influences of the genetic constitution of the individual and the effects of environmental factors" (Wilson 1975: 591). In this sense an organism's phenotype is subject to, yet distinguished from its genotype and environmental factors. *See 'genotype'.*

Replicator: A replicator is anything which is able to copy itself, such as a DNA molecule. Dawkins (1989a) describes genes as 'selfish replicators' and uses the concept of replicators to describe the process of natural selection. Replicators are selfish in the sense that any evolutionary benefit to their replication is primarily of benefit to themselves. Memes are similarly described as selfish replicators (Blackmore 1999). *See 'meme'.*

Satire: Satire may be described as “the use of ridicule, irony, sarcasm etc. to expose folly or vice, or to lampoon an individual” (Ross 1998: 115). Satire is contextually embedded in “a particular culture, in a system of institutions and in the frameworks of belief and knowledge which envelop and embrace these institutions... [Satire] emanates from a perceived disapprobation, by the satirist, of some aspect of a potential satirical target” (Simpson 2003: 8).

Social semiotics: Semiotics may generally be considered as “the study of signs” (Palmer 1997: 25). Social semiotics addresses social phenomena in semiotic terms, focusing on “the way people use semiotic ‘resources’ both to produce communicative artefacts and events and to interpret them – which is also a form of semiotic production – in the context of specific social situations and practices” (Van Leeuwen 2005: xi). In this sense social semiotics considers the relation between discourse and genre in semiotic terms. *See ‘discourse’ and ‘genre’.*

Stereotype: A stereotype may be considered as “a standardized conception or image of a specific group of people or objects” (Nachbar & Lause 1992: 236). People are most often stereotyped according to their age, race, religion, vocation and nationality. These standardized conceptions of people, which may be positive or negative, are shared between members of a group and reflect their belief and values.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and aims of study

It is estimated that life originated on Earth more than 3 billion years ago (Cairns-Smith 1985). The theory of evolution by natural selection, credited to Charles Darwin (Darwin 1902), enables the natural sciences to understand how and why organisms (including man) develop over time.¹ Dennett (1995:21) refers to its advent as the Darwinian Revolution, akin to the Copernican Revolution of the 16th century, that “in a single stroke ... unifies the realm of life, meaning, and purpose with the realm of space and time, cause and effect, mechanism and physical law”. It equalises humankind with all other species, yet it is still sometimes argued that humans are unique. Such arguments generally follow the line that “human beings, in being born, are – uniquely among living creatures – cast into a world of culture” (Richardson 2001: 1). As a scientific and philosophical revolution, the theory of evolution’s influence extends beyond the boundaries of biology and has come to hold implications for human culture.

The Darwinian Revolution has encroached on the social sciences through subsequent studies of cognition and behaviour. Wilson (1975) combines evolutionary biology and sociology in a synthesis he calls ‘sociobiology’. While this approach has added much to our understanding of human behaviour, the weakness in sociobiology lies in that it describes culture and tradition as being purely subject to genetic benefit. This model is questioned by the dual inheritance model of gene-culture coevolution, which notes that cultural evolution may be driven “in directions irrelevant, or even counter, to adaptive

¹ Contemporary evolutionary theory, or neo-Darwinism (Pocklington 2002), has advanced considerably during the 20th century, most notably with the synthesis of Darwinian theory and Mendelian genetics in the 1940s (Burnie 1999), the discovery of DNA by Watson and Crick in 1953 (Watson 1968) and the mapping of the human genome by the Human Genome Project in 2001 (Shennan 2002: 14). Neo-Darwinism, the scientific investigation of the mechanics of natural selection, is not to be confused with social Darwinism, the metaphysical framework applying a ‘survival of the fittest’ doctrine “particularly in the moral and social realm” (Ruse 1992: 75). The major difference between the two is evident in social Darwinism’s idealistic view of upward progress which differs from neo-Darwinism’s non-hierarchical view of progress (Dawkins 1992). In this thesis I make no moral judgements, support no political agenda, suggest no hierarchical structure nor distinguish any qualitative differences between cultures. My focus is on culture as a non-genetic human activity, from the point of view of general selection theory.

through Saussure (Palmer 1997) and semiotics through Barthes (Harland 1999). Communication, film and media studies also often fall under the banner of cultural studies (Gray & McGuigan 1993). While relying on a memetic definition of culture, aspects of cultural theory will be brought into this discussion, in particular genre theory as used in media studies and in social semiotics.⁴ In media studies genres are determined by a textual description, and generally focus on television and film (Lacey 2000). These textual descriptions look at the structure, specifically the “characters, setting, iconography, narrative and style” (Lacey 2000: 133) of works that are categorised into genres according to the similarity of these aspects. Genres then represent systems of shared conventions (Strinati 2000). Commenting on the TV Western, Hall (1999: 29) notes that “a set of extremely tightly-coded ‘rules’ exist whereby stories of a certain recognisable type, content and structure can be easily encoded within the Western form”. Such a categorisation provides useful tools for a discussion of cultural evolution, as conventions can be regarded as related to imitation and as illustrating the evolutionary characteristics of culture. Genre theories also investigate the sociological relationship between the work’s producers and its consumers, and how its content relates to society. This approach to genre is situated in social semiotics, where “content is studied under the heading of ‘discourse’, rather than under the heading of ‘genre’” (Van Leeuwen 2005: 123). The distinction between generic structure and discourse in genre theory indicates the interrelation between the memes manifest in a work and the greater, socially shared “meme pool” (Blackmore 1999: 86), analogous to the gene/gene pool distinction in evolutionary biology. The motivation for introducing genre and discourse is that popular culture generally seems to display the properties of the memetic model of cultural evolution. Popular culture, which can be seen as fundamentally a transmission of information, is usually commercial and imitative, as displayed by sequels and imitations (Nachbar & Lause 1992).⁵ Commercial success is often a major selection pressure, and cultural impact seems to relate to the successful replication of ideas (or memes). In

⁴ The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines genre as “a style or category of art or literature” (Pearsall 1999: 592). See *Glossary of terms*.

⁵ Cultural studies originally distinguished between high and popular culture, generally focusing on the former (Easthope 1991). This split was eroded by Williams’ “recovery of ‘the popular’ from its denigration or sentimentalization by cultural elitists” (Gray & McGuigan 1993: viii). I will refer to graphic narratives as popular culture because of their relation to film and other mass media with which it shares many characteristics; it is usually commercial, mass-produced and aimed at a large audience.

evolutionary terms, conventions may be described as arising from the evolution of memes. Cultural studies may thus provide valuable tools of analysis with which to investigate the evolutionary characteristics of cultural artefacts, due to its close proximity to the subject. Gabora (1997) notes that “if we are to take seriously the idea that culture is an evolutionary process, we can look to evolution to provide the kind of overarching framework for the humanities that it provides for the biological sciences”.

I first came upon this topic through reading the popular science magazine *New Scientist*. While I am interested in the role of evolution in the development of species, I felt that natural selection did not sufficiently explain the origin and nature of human culture. I was left wondering why people create cultural artefacts that often bear no obvious genetic benefit. I then came upon an article about memes in *New Scientist* magazine (Laland & Brown 2002), and subsequently read up on evolutionary theory in Richard Dawkins’ *The selfish gene* (1989) and memes in Susan Blackmore’s *The meme machine* (1999). My wish is to investigate the implications an evolutionary perspective on culture holds on my practical field, the creation of graphic narratives.

Excepting anthropological approaches (Moore 2004), cultural studies rarely take cognizance of evolutionary theory. As Dawkins (1989: 1) laments, “philosophy and the subjects known as the ‘humanities’ are still taught almost as if Darwin had never lived”. It is important for the social sciences to incorporate an evolutionary theory of culture for two reasons. Firstly, the human mind has been shaped by, and is still subject to, the process of natural selection. Secondly, the process of evolution “is the only way we have of explaining functional adaptive design in living things” (Plotkin 2002: 18). The possibility that culture can be explained by the same process warrants further investigation. However, if the theory of memetics is to have an impact on the social sciences, social scientists need to take up the task where evolutionary theorists stop. This approach is impeded by the fact that social scientists often suggest “‘holistic’ explanations, in which macro-phenomena are explained in terms of other macro-phenomena” (Sperber 1996: 2), while natural scientists work on smaller aspects to ultimately illustrate the whole. Memetics, focusing on the cumulative effect of micro-

phenomena, will not be taken seriously “until more social scientists learn a fundamental lesson from other areas of science: patient chipping away at perplexing problems yields dividends in the long run” (Laland & Brown 2002: 43).

An evolutionary foundation to cultural studies promises a new understanding of the evolutionary characteristics of graphic narratives by referring to memes, imitation and the role of influence in cultural production. By combining the model of memetics with genre theory it may be possible to discuss visual culture in terms of a ‘natural science of culture’ (Plotkin 2002); of the inheritance, transmission and selection of memes. I will investigate three South African graphic narratives by considering their structures, in terms of genre, and their content, in terms of discourse, against the background of cultural evolutionary theory. I suggest that it may be enlightening to view the concepts of genre and discourse in terms of the evolution of culture, and hope that such an approach may provide useful tools for the evolutionary analysis of popular visual culture.

1.2 Theoretical framework and methodology

The theoretical framework for this paper will be established by a broad literature review of the field of evolutionary epistemology. The term evolutionary epistemology was coined by Campbell (1974) after Popper’s theory of objective knowledge and natural selection epistemology (1972, 1984). It is evolutionary in that it is based on neo-Darwinian theories of evolution and epistemological in that it seeks to describe the development of knowledge in terms of evolutionary theory (Hull 2001). As a descriptive epistemology it may not claim any justifications of knowledge, in contrast to traditional epistemology which attempts to distinguish true belief from knowledge (Löw 1984). It has, however, been implemented by both Popper (1972) and Hull (Griffiths 2000) to explain the apparent upward progression of science.

Evolutionary epistemology encompasses two related but distinct fields; that of the natural evolution of sensory and cognitive systems as determining the nature of knowledge, and

that of the evolution of scientific theories and culture (Bradie & Harms 2004). Cognitive studies of brain development are linked to theories of cultural evolution by the multi-level evolution of culture-gene coevolution (Boyd & Richerson 1985), which proposes that a capacity for culture was favoured by natural selection, and that culture in turn influenced the development of cognitive functions (Lumsden & Wilson 1982).⁶ Models of cultural evolution have been suggested for the study of the evolution of culture. In evolutionary epistemology these models view cultural evolution not as directly analogous to natural selection, but as a “special case of selection” (Hull 2001: 5015).

One of these models, called memetics, will be introduced as the foundation for the investigation into genre and discourse. Memetics proposes the ‘meme’ as a “new kind of replicator” (Dawkins 1989: 192).⁷ It is based on replicator dynamics (Schuster & Sigmund 1983), with memes as units of cultural transmission which are socially inherited through the largely unique human ability of imitation. Memes are distinguished from information acquired through operant learning and genetic predispositions by its method of transmission (Blackmore 1999).⁸ The development of human language is relevant to this point, especially considering its role in the transmission of cultural information (Aitchison 1989). The epidemiological approach describes the transmission of memes as akin to viral infection in that they replicate with self-interest, using human minds as hosts (Sperber 1996). This supports the view that, as a special case of selection, memetic evolution may or may not offer a genetic benefit. The general theory of selection views memetic selection as a separate system of evolution, replicating for the benefit of the

⁶ The influence of culture on genetic evolution is vividly illustrated by the development of lactose tolerance in response to increased dairy farming and milk drinking (Holden & Mace 1997). This gene/culture distinction contests sociobiology by suggesting that cultural evolution is “not just another form of evolution in the service of genes” (Blackmore 1999: 116).

⁷ A replicator is anything which is able to copy itself, such as a DNA molecule. This was the “vital ingredient” (Dawkins 1989a: 128) necessary for life to arise. Placing the emphasis on the replicator in evolutionary theory was especially espoused by Dawkins (1989a, 1989b, 1999). Other units of cultural inheritance have been suggested, like culturgen (Lumsden & Wilson 1982) and m-culture (Cloak 1975). The term ‘meme’ seems to be more popular, having been entered into the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Pearsall 1999). See *Glossary of terms*.

⁸ Chimpanzees, orang-utans and chaffinches have been found to display imitation and, in a sense, culture (Lynch & Baker 1993; Whiten et al. 1999; Van Schaik et al. 2003; Castro & Toro 2004). They do not, however, appear to equal the complexity of human culture, as argued by Premack and Premack (1994).

memes themselves.⁹ This view, called the meme's eye view, suggests that "meme X spread among people because X is a good replicator" (Dennett 1995: 364), regardless of the genetic or cultural benefit it holds for its host. It is also suggested that complementary memes may, like genes, combine to create a "co-adapted meme complex" (Dawkins 1989: 199) or a "memplex" (Speel cited in Blackmore 1999: 19). There are several objections to a memetic theory of cultural evolution. For one, the vague location of memes offered by its definition makes determining the 'object of selection' difficult (Mayr 1997). As configurations of neurons, memes can be regarded as "living structures, not just metaphorically but technically" (after Humphreys in Dawkins 1989: 192). But they are also linked to artefacts, "the presence of which in the shared environment of a human group permits the propagation of ideas" (Sperber 1996: 1). Furthermore, it is difficult to determine what one meme is. Dawkins (1989) questions whether an entire symphony is a meme, or if a memorable excerpt is a more proper meme. This problem also faces genetics, and may not be a valid objection.¹⁰ Population dynamics (Boyd & Richerson 1985) and evolutionary game theory are approaches that sidestep these problems by not requiring such distinctions in order to make assumptions about cultural processes (Bradie & Harms 2004). Critics often claim that memetic transmission, unlike genetic transmission, is Lamarckian, and thus cannot be understood in terms of Darwinian evolution (Gould 2000).¹¹ However, Dennett (1998) notes that unicellular organisms such as viruses and bacteria evolve in a Lamarckian manner, and "since memes are no more multicellular than they are sexual, the fact that there is no clear way ... of distinguishing mutations from phenotypic acquisitions hardly shows that they are disqualified from a neo-Darwinian treatment".

⁹ Describing memes as 'selfish' is a metaphor, as neither genes nor memes possess will. Blackmore (1999: 5) suggests that "the shorthand 'genes want x' can always be spelled out as 'genes that do x are more likely to be passed on'".

¹⁰ Dawkins (1989: 37) contests the simplification of referring to one gene, noting that "no one factor, genetic or environmental, can be considered as the single 'cause' of any part of a baby".

¹¹ Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck (1744-1829) incorrectly supposed that characteristics acquired in one generation were passed on to the next. This theory was superseded by Darwin's theory of natural selection (Burnie 1999).

In order to apply the theory of memetics to the study of graphic narratives, I will introduce conceptual tools used in the study of genre¹² and graphic narratives. Genre theory in media studies categorise works along general similarities in patterns, forms, styles and structure (Lacey 2000). Taken from literary theory (Dubrow 1982), these studies are often applied in film studies (Jameson 1994). Genres are generally determined by a content analysis of “the types of characters, setting, iconography, narrative and style” (Lacey 2000: 136) of works of genre. Genre theories in social semiotics link genre, as a convention of communication, to studies of discourse¹³, and focus on the interrelation between works of genre and society (Van Leeuwen 2005). These concepts address the intertextuality between the concepts in a work and the transtextuality between different works (Stam et al. 1992), and are of interest here inasmuch as it also seems to investigate the meme/artefact distinction and the relation between memes and the meme-pool in memetic theory. The background to social semiotics (Van Leeuwen 2005) will be kept brief, keeping in mind the limited scope of this thesis. Studies of graphic narratives provide invaluable tools of analysis (McCloud 1993). These fields provide tools to discuss the evolution of memes and co-adapted meme complexes in the realm of popular culture.

The theory of memes in evolutionary epistemology will be applied to identify the similarities and differences in three South African graphic narratives. The works I will analyse are *Rocco de Wet, Grensvegter 48: net een keer terug* (Republican Press 1976), *Bomfok: liefde vir die vyand deel 4* (Botes 1994) and *So stil soos 'n landmyn* (Du Plessis & Du Plessis 2004).¹⁴ I will combine the broad memetic model of cultural evolution, which describes culture as evolving in a Darwinian sense, with the study of genre and discourse as used in media studies and social semiotics. An analytic study of the evolutionary characteristics of these graphic narratives could be made possible by contextualising the works, investigating their textual properties, and discussing the results

¹² See *Glossary of terms*.

¹³ See *Glossary of terms*.

¹⁴ These titles may be translated as *Rocco de Wet, Border warrior 48: return only once* (Republican Press 1976), *Bombfuck: love for the enemy part 4* (Botes 1994) and *As quiet as a landmine* (Du Plessis & Du Plessis 2004).

in terms of the presence or absence of concepts and conventions. These elements will then be considered in the light of memetic theory.

1.3 Outline of chapters

Chapter one serves as a general introduction to the study. Chapter two will lay the groundwork for evolutionary epistemology by introducing Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection (Burnie 1999), the contemporary understanding of evolution (Dawkins 1989), its role in brain development and the origin of culture (Sperber & Hirschfeld 2001) and how these ideas lead to evolutionary epistemology (Popper 1972 and Campbell 1974). The discussion will then turn to general selection theory (Cziko 1992) and models of cultural evolution (Feldman 2001). These models often contrast with a sociobiological understanding (Wilson 1975, Hamilton 1964a, 1964b). The gene/culture split will be discussed by referring to niche construction (Odling-Smee et al. 2003) and the dual inheritance model (Boyd & Richerson 1985).

Chapter three will focus on the memetic model of cultural evolution (Dawkins 1989; Blackmore 1999) and discuss the related concepts of epidemiology (Sperber 1996), replicator dynamics (Godfrey-Smith 2000), learning (Tomasello et al. 1993), imitation (Gabora 1997), creativity (Simonton 1999; Findaly & Wilson 1989), and cultural transmission (Durham 1990). These concepts are necessary tools for a 'meme's eye view' (Dennett 1995) analysis of cultural evolution.

Chapter four will introduce the conceptual tools of discourse and genre in social semiotics. A broad background of social semiotics will contextualise these tools (Van Leeuwen 2005), and special attention will be paid to studies of film genre (Lacey 2000) and film semiotics (Stam et al. 1992). In conclusion this chapter will tentatively link these concepts, and the interactive relation between discourse and genre, with memetic theory.

Chapter five will put the suggested framework into practice by analysing three South African graphic narratives, namely *Rocco de Wet*, *Grensvegter* (Republican Press 1976), *Bomfok* (Botes 1994) and *So stil soos 'n landmyn* (Du Plessis & Du Plessis 2004). These works will be contextualised, taking into consideration the political environment in which each appear, and then explored by an analysis of the narrative, characters, setting, iconography and style of each work. This chapter will conclude with an assessment of the validity of considering these works in an evolutionary light.

Chapter six will present a summary of this study and assess its contribution to the analysis of cultural artefacts as the visible products of the process of cultural evolution, and to the analysis of South African graphic narratives in particular. I will discuss the limitations of this method of analysis, and suggest possibly fruitful avenues for future investigations.

1.4 Conclusion

The Darwinian revolution is still to make its impact felt on the social sciences (Plotkin 2002), and cultural studies rarely take cognizance of evolutionary theory. A natural science of culture would recognise evolutionary biology and cultural evolution as role-players in cultural change and development. This approach should be allied with cultural studies, which also investigates cultural phenomena, and not taken as a superseding theory. One way this could be accomplished is to combine the relatively new model of cultural evolution called memetics with the study of genre and discourse in social semiotics. I will combine these approaches in order to analyse three South African graphic narratives. Such an investigation starts with a brief orientation into the field of evolutionary theory and evolutionary epistemology, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 2: Evolutionary epistemology

2.1 Introduction

Before constructing a model of cultural evolution, it is necessary to establish the broad theoretical foundation of evolution. Studies of cultural evolution are generally positioned in the field of evolutionary epistemology, which considers the origin and nature of knowledge in terms of evolutionary theory in two important ways (Hull 2001). As such evolutionary epistemology is implicitly associated with Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection (1902). Firstly, the origin of the cognitive capacity for culture is seen as the result of natural selection (Popper 1984). Secondly, it is also argued that, while evolution itself – “even in its biological aspects – is a knowledge process ... the natural-selection paradigm for such knowledge increments can be generalized to other epistemic activities, such as learning, thought, and science” (Campbell 1974: 413). A brief overview of the theory of evolution by natural selection provides the foundation for this thesis' perspective on culture. This evolutionary foundation also evokes the general selection theory which introduces the discussion of memes and cultural evolution in the next chapter.

2.2 The theory of evolution

There were many dramatic developments in science in the nineteenth century, but undoubtedly the most important of these in terms of understanding the place of humankind in the Universe (and arguably the most important idea in the whole of science) was the theory of natural selection, which, for the first time, offered a scientific explanation of the fact of evolution. (Gribbin 2002: 319)

The impact of *On the Origin of Species*¹ (Darwin 1902) is comparable to a scientific revolution in that it necessitated the “rejection of one time-honoured scientific theory in favour of another incompatible with it” (Kuhn 1970: 6).² Several theorists before Darwin had proposed explanations for the evolution of the diversity of species on Earth, “but it was Darwin who first put together a coherent and tenable account of why we exist” (Dawkins 1989: 1).

Darwin’s theory is historically (and perhaps logically) preceded by a re-evaluation of humankind’s place in the Universe. Leakey (1981: 10) summarises that “Western civilisation has, for more than a millennium, been based on a Judeo-Christian religious foundation that views human beings, and the planet we inhabit, as the central focus of God’s province”. This view of the world was altered by, among others, the Copernican Revolution and re-evaluations of the age of the earth.³ The conception of an ancient and constantly changing Earth suggested the possibility that species, instead of being unalterable, evolved from other species and continue to change subject to natural laws. It is from this conceptual foundation that the 18th century taxonomist Buffon and the 19th century zoologist Lamarck could theorise on the possible development and evolution of species (Burnie 1999).⁴ The theory of natural selection validated the fact of evolution and instigated the major shift in science that may be called Darwinism, which “unifies all of biology and the history of our planet into a single grand story” (Dennett 1995: 20).

¹ Full title: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (Darwin 1902).

² The likeness of Kuhn’s theories to evolutionary epistemology has been pointed out, but “although Kuhn also uses natural selection analogues, a natural selection of paradigms imputes to surviving paradigms a superiority over their predecessors which he explicitly questions” (Campbell 1974: 436-437).

³ By 1658 the exact date of creation was believed to be 23 October, 4004 BC (Zimmer 2001). In Darwin’s day this date was questioned by Lyell and extended to 20 million years ago by Lord Kelvin in 1860 (Knedler 1973). The earth is currently estimated to be 4, 5 billion years old (Gribbin 2002). Ancient rocks in Greenland indicate that simple life arose at least 3, 8 billion years ago (Cairns-Smith 1985) and evidence of bilateral symmetry, a critical step in the early evolution of animals, suggests that complex life arose between 580 and 600 million years ago (Bottjer 2005).

⁴ Foucault (1969: 39) suggests that one could “constitute as a unity everything that has constituted the evolutionist theme from Buffon to Darwin”. Darwin (1902) passingly traces this theme to Aristotle.

2.2.1 Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection

The significance of Darwin's account of evolution was his inclusion of the concept of natural selection, an idea he borrowed from Malthus' *An essay on the Principle of Population* published in 1798 (Zimmer 2001).⁵ The crux of the theory of natural selection is the suggestion that "as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life" (Darwin 1902: 79). This struggle for existence, in conjunction with natural laws, induces change in species over time, and may lead to the creation of new species:

These laws, taken in the largest sense, being Growth with Reproduction; Inheritance which is almost implied by reproduction; Variability from the direct and indirect action of the conditions of life, and from use and disuse; a Ratio of Increase so high as to lead to a Struggle for Life, and as a consequence to Natural Selection, entailing Divergence of Character and the Extinction of less-improved forms. (Darwin 1902: 669)

Darwin presented a robust argument, and Zimmer (2001: 54) notes that "by the 1870s, almost all serious scientists in Britain had accepted evolution". Darwin was ultimately vindicated in the 20th century with the so-called 'modern synthesis' (Huxley 1942). The establishment of genetics and the discovery of DNA lay bare the laws that Darwin had surmised. It is presently understood that "life is built from coded instructions written in the genes, the DNA" (Ridley 2000: 56), and the theory of evolution by natural selection is considered as "the great unifying idea in biology" (Freeman & Herron 2004: 95).

⁵ Darwin was forced to publish his book after Wallace independently discovered the principle of natural selection, also after Malthus. The credit of the discovery, by gentlemanly agreement, resides with Darwin (Butler 1921).

2.2.2 The modern synthesis

A most important development in Darwinism occurred with the modern synthesis, effectively the combination of the theory of natural selection with Mendel's experiments in heredity (Huxley 1942).⁶ This synthesis hailed the era of molecular biology and genetics, and allowed biologists to identify the unit of heredity: the gene. Genes are encoded in DNA molecules, first discovered by Francis and Crick in 1953 (Watson 1968). A significant landmark in human genetics is the simultaneous publication of the first draft of the human genome by the Human Genome Project and Celera Genomics in 2001 (Dale & Von Schatz 2002). Filipinski and Kumar (2005: 546) hold that "this accomplishment surely ranks with the moon landing as a major achievement of the 'big science' paradigm". While the future of genetics today lies largely in the medical advances offered by an understanding of our genetic make-up, the concepts originating in genetics are often used to uncover the underlying process of evolution. Contemporary evolutionary theories discuss the evolutionary process in abstract terms in order to determine the underlying generic processes (Cziko 1995). This 'universal Darwinism' is discussed later.

2.2.3 The origin of *Homo sapiens* and blind variation

Darwin's theory established evolution by natural selection as the origin of species, which suggests that *Homo sapiens* itself exists due to this process. Darwin was initially hesitant to make such conclusions, carefully noting that "much light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history" (1902: 668).⁷ However, it seems that the origin of humankind remains controversial, and at the time of writing objections against evolutionary theory come from supporters of 'intelligent design', a school of thought holding that the

⁶ The importance of Mendel's experiments in plant hybridization passed unrecognised in Darwin's day (Stubbe 1972).

⁷ Dawkins (1989: 267) asks, "religious answers apart ... when you are actually challenged to think of pre-Darwinian answers to the questions 'What is man?' 'Is there a meaning to life?' 'What are we for?', can you, as a matter of fact, think of any that are not now worthless except for their (considerable) historic interest? There is such a thing as being just plain wrong, and that is what, before 1859, all answers to those questions were".

apparent design of biology points “to the hand of a higher being at work in the world” (Chang 2005: 4)⁸. Dawkins (1986: 5) succinctly states the antithesis: “natural selection, the blind, unconscious, automatic process which Darwin discovered, and which we now know is the explanation for the existence and apparently purposeful form of all life, has no purpose in mind”. This view is echoed by Freeman and Herron, who note that there is “nothing conscious or intelligent about the process” (2005: 97). These issues relate to this thesis only inasmuch as it is assumed here that the human species, brain and culture originate from a blind process of evolution by natural selection.

2.3 The natural origin of culture

Evolutionary epistemology approaches the concept of culture from the evolutionary foundation presented above. The controversy in the intelligent design debate may stem from the view that humans are special in some way. Dunbar (2004: 141) writes that anthropologists view culture as “*the* uniquely human trait, that which marks us out as a cut above the dumb beasts, the one thing that allows us to ... rise above our genes, and act in ways that are at odds with the demands of our biological heritage”. Even Dawkins (1989: 189), a self-confessed neo-Darwinist, echoes this view: “Are there any good reasons for supposing our own species to be unique? I believe the answer is yes. Most of what is unusual about man can be summed up in one word: culture”.

The term culture is used with different meanings in sociocultural anthropology (Barkow 1989).⁹ Keesing (1974: 73) notes that because “‘culture’ does not have some true and sacred and eternal meaning we are trying to discover ... [theorists must often define] a class of natural phenomena it can most strategically label”. To this end culture is defined here after Boyd and Richerson (1985: 33) as “information capable of affecting individual’s phenotypes which they acquire from other conspecifics by teaching or

⁸ Foucault (1969) has written on the influence that power and ideology has on knowledge systems. The intelligent design Centre for Science and Culture has dubious political links in being “financed by some of the same Christian conservatives who helped Mr. Bush win the White House” (Wilgoren 2005: 1).

⁹ Anthropological theory has often incorporated evolutionary theory, from Boaz to Geertz (Moore 2004).

imitation”.¹⁰ This definition echoes the suggestion that culture is a shared system of socially transmitted information (Keesing 1974). It is deemed important to consider the implications of such a definition. Firstly, culture is information capable of affecting behaviour. Secondly, culture is somehow distinct from the genotype and, lastly, not all forms of learning generate culture. The distinction made between genetically inherited behaviour and learned behaviour is described by Cloak’s i- and m-culture (1975). This divide is probably what causes the natural sciences, focussing on the former, and social sciences, focussing on the latter, to operate separately (Plotkin 2002).

Evolutionary epistemology examines the divide between genes and culture by looking at the natural origin of culture and the interaction between genes and culture. The link between the natural evolution of humankind and the emergence of culture lies in the sudden and phenomenal enlargement of the hominid¹¹ brain between 500 000 and 100 000 years ago (Johanson & Edgar 2001).

2.3.1 The genetic basis of culture

Wilson (1975: 548) suggests that “at a glance a perceptive Martian zoologist would regard the globular head as a most significant clue to human biology”. The hominid brain enlarged roughly threefold over the past 2 million years of human evolution (Ruff et al.

¹⁰ According to this definition culture may not be a uniquely human trait, as it may be argued that chimpanzees, orang-utans and chaffinches display culture (Lynch & Baker 1993; Whiten et al. 1999; Van Schaik et al. 2003; Castro & Toro 2004). Human culture is unique in its complexity, perhaps the result of our unique ability to “accumulate ideas and inventions generation by generation” (Ridley 2003: 209) and of “learning from the learning of others” (Cziko 1995: 152). Gabora (1997) suggests that “apes are not *a priori* prohibited from evolving complex cognition, but that there is insufficient evolutionary pressure to tinker with the activation threshold until it achieves the requisite delicate balance to sustain a stream of thought, or to establish and refine the necessary feedback mechanisms to dynamically tune it to match to the degree of conceptual fluidity needed at any given instant”. See ‘culture’ in *Glossary of terms*.

¹¹ A recent reclassification based on genetic research proposes to place orang-utans, gorillas, chimps and humans in the formerly exclusively *Homo* sub-family *Homininae* (McCarthy & Rubridge 2005). This reclassification would negate the term hominid, and require using the term ‘hominin’ when referring to members of the sub-family. For the sake of argument I use the term hominid to refer to living humans and their fossil ancestors.

1997).¹² This increase in encephalization is often linked to paleoanthropological evidence of manufactured stone tools and barter (Klein & Edgar 2002). Besides offering clues to the origin of culture, the increase in brain size is also related to the emergence of consciousness (Dennett 1995) and our innate predisposition for language (Aitchison 1989).¹³

While it is generally assumed that the increase in brain size resulted from natural selection, precisely what the selection pressures were remains uncertain (Blackmore 1999). Explanations range from the genetic advantage offered by learning (Tomasello et al. 1993) to elaborations on the ‘aquatic ape’ theory (Roede et al. 1991) and sexual selection “for increasingly high levels of cultural capacity” (Barkow 1989: 155). The rapidity of the increase is often explained by the Baldwin effect (after Baldwin 1902) which predicts that the ability to learn and adapt to conditions, “itself a product of genetic evolution by natural selection, not only gives the organisms who have it an edge over their hard-wired cousins who cannot redesign themselves, but also reflects back on the process of genetic evolution and speeds it up” (Dennett 1995: 184). This suggests an interaction between genetic and cultural evolution, where “genes favourable to the new behaviour would begin to be selected by biological evolution, thus equipping new species to better exploit the new behaviours” (Oppenheimer 2004: 20). The interaction between genes and culture is referred to as gene-culture coevolution (Cavalli-Sforza 2000) or the system of dual inheritance (Boyd & Richerson 1985).

2.3.2 Gene-culture coevolution

Evolutionary epistemology’s view of culture is based on biological evolution but also entertains the possibility that culture may influence biological evolution. The theory of niche construction emphasises “how the modifications that organisms make to their

¹² This period encompasses the jump from an early Pleistocene average brain size of 914cm³ to the modern *Homo sapiens* average of 1349cm³ (Ruff et al. 1997). Most notable is the enlargement of the cerebellum and the cerebral cortex, parts “essential for coordination and higher thought” (Oppenheimer 2004: 22).

¹³ Johanson and Edgar (2001: 106) surmise that “perhaps language evolved in tandem with our enlarging brain or was a cause, rather than a consequence, of brain enlargement during the Pleistocene”.

environment can feed back to affect subsequent evolution” (Odling-Smee et al. 2003: 357). Likewise, the Baldwin effect suggests a causal connection between biological evolution and the rise of culture (Blackmore 1999).¹⁴ This interactive connection is the focus of gene-culture coevolutionary theory (Cavalli-Sforza 2000) and the dual inheritance model of Boyd and Richerson (1985). The dual inheritance model attempts to “clarify the logical relationship between cultural transmission and other Darwinian processes and stimulate social scientists to make empirical observations that may eventually allow us to make reliable general statements about the evolution of human behaviour” (Boyd & Richerson 1985: 2).¹⁵ This logical relationship has led to speculations of a universal selection theory (Cziko 1992), in turn leading to models of cultural evolution (Feldman 2001). Shennan (2001: 16) notes that the attraction of such a universal theory is that “the processes of biological evolution and genetic transmission, and the factors affecting them from one generation to the next, are much better understood than cultural transmission, so there may be much to be learned from exploring both the positive and negative analogies between the systems and the way they operate”.

2.4 Universal selection theory

Besides accepting that the human capacity for culture is the result of natural selection, evolutionary epistemology describes cultural evolution as a process of Darwinian evolution (Campbell 1974). It does so by invoking a general theory of selection (Cziko 1995). An important step towards a general selection theory is to consider genes as replicators¹⁶ (Dawkins 1989). Universal selection theory examines the underlying mechanics of evolution “to abstract from the specific biological set-up and view the dynamics as description of the evolution of replicators” (Schuster & Sigmund 1983: 533). This suggests that natural selection is substrate neutral and applies to any dynamic system

¹⁴ Another example of this interaction is the development of lactose tolerance in humans, evolved in response to increased dairy farming (Holden & Mace 1997).

¹⁵ The interaction between genes and behaviour is the focus of sociobiology (Wilson 1975; Lumsden & Wilson 1982), but evolutionary epistemology lays less emphasis on the role of genes as the basis of behaviour.

¹⁶ See the *Glossary of terms*.

of replication (Dennett 1995).¹⁷ Universal selection models stem from models of population genetics, as employed by Boyd and Richerson (1985) in their description of dual inheritance. The process of natural selection is thus condensed to the blind variation and selective retention of replicators. In other words, “if there is a replicator that makes imperfect copies of itself only some of which survive, then evolution simply must occur” (Blackmore 1999: 11). Cziko (1995: 304) describes the process thus:

Consider a population of self-replicating entities that vary in ways relevant to their reproductive success, and that inhabit an environment of limited space and resources ... If these entities produce quite (but not always perfectly) accurate copies of themselves, after a few generations the winnowing effect of selection will be noticed as the population inexorably shifts towards a preponderance of new entities that better fit their environment.

This raises the possibility that cultural evolution is a second, non-genetic evolutionary process, which may account for the apparent disparity between our genetic inheritance and cultural behaviours such as suicide or celibacy (Dunbar 2004). It remains a difficult task, however, to determine the cultural analogue of the gene. Several candidates have been suggested, such as Lumsden and Wilson’s ‘culturegen’ (1982). A popular model of cultural evolution, and the one which will be used in this thesis, defines a meme¹⁸ as the unit of cultural selection (after Dawkins 1989). This model will be discussed in depth in the next chapter.

2.5 Conclusion

The evolutionary epistemological perspective on culture holds that evolution itself is a knowledge process (Campbell 1974). Furthermore, it holds that humankind is the product

¹⁷ Dennett (1995: 50) describes natural selection as an algorithm, a “formal process that can be counted on – logically – to yield a certain sort of result whenever it is ‘run’ or instantiated”. The “substrate neutrality it thereby possesses permits us to consider its application to just about anything [resulting from such an algorithm]” (Dennett 1995: 82).

¹⁸ See the *Glossary of terms*.

of natural selection and that “the process of cumulative blind variation and selection is the only currently available scientific explanation that is in principle capable of explaining the emergence of the adapted complexity required for life” (Cziko 1995: 303). This point leads to the conclusion that the increase in encephalization, and the associated cognitive capacity for culture, is also the result of evolution by natural selection (Oppenheimer 2004). Finally, a universal selection theory may produce reliable models of cultural evolution (Feldman 2001).

The following chapter will attempt to construct the model of cultural evolution based on the concept of memes, defined as the units of cultural transmission (Blackmore 1999). The replicator dynamics involved in cultural evolution, such as transmission (Durham 1990), learning (Tomasello et al. 1993), imitation (Gabora 1997) and creativity (Simonton 1999), will be discussed and compared to biological evolution.

Chapter 3: Cultural evolution

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I outlined how theories of cultural evolution stem from evolutionary epistemology's naturalistic perspective on culture. These theories generally hold that culture evolves in a Darwinian manner and assume that culture is a second system of heredity, to a large degree evolving autonomously from biological evolution. Furthermore, these theories suggest that there are lineages of descent in cultural systems and that these lineages evolve through a process of transformation and diversification (Durham 1992). The evolutionary processes of cultural transformation are described by a general selection theory, or universal Darwinism, as a dynamic system of transmission, variation, and differential fitness (or selection) of units of cultural transmission (Dennett 1995). This chapter introduces the emerging approach to cultural evolution which defines these units of culturally transmitted information as memes (Blackmore 1999). This evolutionary approach strives to "marry the social and biological sciences" (Plotkin 2003: 17) by clarifying gene/culture distinction and producing a model of cultural evolution. I will mention the objections to such a theory of culture (Gould 1996) and the focus of critical debates among its proponents (Aunger 2001). The processes of cultural evolution discussed here are assumed to be manifested in cultural artefacts, which will be described as the visible products of cultural evolution. This assumption is relevant to the later analysis of graphic narratives.

3.2 Memes as units of cultural transmission

Models of cultural evolution are based on both evolutionary epistemology's perspective on the nature and origin of culture and a general selection theory (Durham 2001). These models attempt to clarify the distinction between our genetic and cultural heritage, often in contrast to sociobiology (Wilson 1975). The approach invoked here defines a "hypothetical unit of cultural transmission" (Pocklington 2001: 9554) as a meme.

Dawkins (1989)¹ coined the term meme and defines it, like a gene, as a replicator, viewed as the elementary unit required for natural selection to occur. This suggests that cultural evolution, like biological evolution, is of a particle nature.² Determining the boundaries of such a unit, however, remains a matter of contention, as memes do not “come neatly parcelled up in ready-labelled units” (Blackmore 1999: 53).³ Dawkins (1989) proposes that we can expect a replicator to possess the characteristics of longevity, fecundity and fidelity. Blackmore (1999: 58) explains that “a replicator has to be copied accurately, many copies must be made, and the copies must last a long time”. She argues that language plays a major role in both the fecundity and fidelity of memes. In this sense culture is seen as the result of differential selection of variant memes.

Determining the object of selection poses problems for evolutionary theory in general (Mayr 1997), and whether or not memes are objects of selection remains uncertain. However, if culture is truly an autonomous “second source of heritable variation” (Durham 1992: 331), a theory of memes is able to shift the burden of benefit away from genes and explain behaviour that seem to run counter to reproductive benefit. This is in contrast to sociobiology which seeks to explain all human behaviour in terms of genetic benefit (Wilson 1975, 1978a). Cultural evolutionary theory challenges the assumption that “the behaviour of human beings tends to accord with predictions based on sociobiology’s central principle of fitness maximization” (Barash 1982: 7). Memes do not necessarily increase the reproductive success of the persons that carry them.

Objections to such a theory stem from the view that cultural evolution differs from biological evolution to such an extent that the theory is nullified. These objections have lead to its limited use in academic circles, and many of its advocates’ “uncritical

¹ Dawkins’ (1989) purpose was not to construct a theory of culture, but to emphasise the role of the replicator in natural selection. He has subsequently distanced himself from such theories of culture, believing that “its main value may lie not so much in helping us to understand human culture as in sharpening our perception of natural selection” (Dawkins 1999: 112).

² This is reductionism in the sense that it “explains a complex entity at any particular level in the hierarchy of organization, in terms of entities only one level down the hierarchy; entities which, themselves, are likely to be complex enough to need further reducing to their own component parts” (Dawkins 1991a: 13).

³ Blackmore (1999: 54) continues that genes are just as difficult to label, yet the “intrinsic uncertainty about just what counts as a gene has not impeded progress in genetics and biology”.

(positively zealous) position on memes has helped in associating the term meme with popular pseudoscientific literature” (Pocklington 2001: 9555). While it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of memetics, it remains a promising framework for a theory of cultural evolution and is pursued here as such.

3.2.1 The object of selection

In general terms, ‘descent with modification’ (Darwin 1902) occurs when elements of a diverse reproductive population are differentially selected. An element’s ‘fitness’ refers to the extent to which inherited characteristics enable it to survive long enough to reproduce. In biology this fitness is related to the phenotype, which is in turn determined by hereditary information encoded in DNA. In this way the forces of evolution “produce changes in the frequency of genotypes and thus the evolution of phenotypes” (Boyd & Richerson 1985: 3). In other words it can be said that “selection is directly for the phenotype and indirectly for the genotype or parts of it” (Mayr 1997: 2093). This interaction makes determining the object of selection a difficult task and presents complications for a theory of memes.

Theorists have alternately identified the group, species, individual or gene as the object of selection (Mayr 1997). Dawkins (1999) distinguishes between a *replicator* (the gene) and its *vehicle* (the individual organism), while Hull (1980) uses the term *interactor* to emphasise the dynamic between genotype, phenotype and environment.⁴ This conceptual problem holds similar difficulties for a theory of memes. Dennett (1995: 354) describes memes as information “in a media-neutral, language-neutral sense. Thus the meme is primarily a *semantic* classification, not a *syntactic* classification that might be directly observable in ‘brain language’ or natural language”.⁵ Further study is required to find

⁴ This interactivity is reflected in the theory of niche-construction, which describes how the genotype and phenotype affect the environment and, effectively, the selection pressures (Odling-Smee et al. 2003).

⁵ This echoes structural anthropology’s definition of culture as “systems of shared symbols and meanings” (Keesing 1974: 79). However, Durham (1992: 331) distinguishes cultural evolutionary theory from “classical evolutionary anthropology, neoevolutionism and sociobiology”.

direct evidence of memes, as Aunger (2001: 213) notes: “meme-promoters will only be proven right about cultural inheritance when someone finds a meme”.

In the face of these problems Blackmore (1999: 66) simplifies the definition and uses the term meme “indiscriminately to refer to memetic information in any of its many forms; including ideas, the brain structures that instantiate those ideas, the behaviours these brain structures produce, and their versions in books, recipes, maps and written music”. This approach elaborates on memetic theory as supported by a general selection theory, until empirical evidence provides clarity on the object of cultural selection. A theory of memes may provide an explanation for the split between genes and culture.

3.2.2 Cultural evolution as a second system of heritable variation

Dawkins (1989) argues that the fundamental unit of selection in biological evolution is the gene: any adaptation that increases the reproductive success (fitness) of an organism benefits the genotype of that organism. Sociobiology attempts to “identify the behaviours and rules by which human beings increase their Darwinian fitness through the manipulation of society” (Wilson 1975: 548). While sociobiology provides plausible genetic explanations for, among others, human sexuality and reciprocal altruism, human behaviours such as celibate priesthood and suicide bombing are difficult to explain in terms of their genetic benefit (Dunbar 2004). Shennan (2001: 16) notes that cultural evolution “can lead to outcomes that are different from those predicted by the requirements of reproductive success, including outcomes that are actually maladaptive from the reproductive point of view”.

Evolutionary epistemology assumes that “cultural evolution is a truly autonomous evolutionary process where a form of Darwinian selection operates on cultural traits, favouring the traits that are more capable of generating replicas of themselves (whether or not they contribute to the reproductive success of their carriers)” (Sperber & Hirschfield 1999: cxxi). In other words memes are seen as ultimately replicating for their

own benefit and not for the benefit of genes. Blackmore (1999: 52) considers this perspective, often referred to as taking the meme's eye view, as "the foundation of memetics".

3.2.3 The limits of the memetic model of cultural evolution

Numerous objections to a theory of memes, especially to its manifestation in evolutionary psychology (Rose & Rose 2000), often result in apologetic asides in literature on the subject. These objections often suggest that the differences between cultural and biological evolution outweigh the similarities, and that it is an "overly reductionist assumption that the Darwinian natural paradigm will fully encompass our social and technological history as well" (Gould 1996: 219).⁶

The two main differences Gould (1996: 222) points out are that cultural information can be transmitted both vertically along the hereditary line and horizontally to non-kin, and that cultural evolution seems to be Lamarckian in its "directional and cumulative character that no natural Darwinian evolution can possess". Dennett (1998) responds that both horizontal transmission and Lamarckian accumulation seems to operate in the evolution of single-celled organisms such as viruses, where the genotype/phenotype distinction breaks down.⁷

Criticism has also been levelled at the particle nature of a theory of memes, "the delineation of which is often (erroneously) seen as a necessary prerequisite for Darwinian evolution. Darwinian models of cultural evolution have subsequently been criticized (and are commonly being rejected) on the grounds that culture cannot be divided into discrete particles" (Mesoudi, Whiten & Laland 2004: 1). This division is made difficult in that

⁶ Gould (2000) is at the head of the 'punctuated equilibrium' debate which opposes the view espoused by Dawkins (1989) that Darwinian evolution is a gradual process of minor increments in adaptation.

⁷ Dennett (1998) wonders "why we don't hear more about a third disanalogy: cultural ideas don't reproduce sexually ... [But] surely 99% of all the Darwinian evolution that has ever occurred on this planet was among asexually reproducing replicators ... the absence of sexual reproduction in the memosphere is no challenge to neo-Darwinian explanations. But exactly the same point can be made about the purported disanalogies of Lamarckianism and horizontal transmission or anastomosis (lineage-joining)".

“cultural traits may be transmitted singly or in bundles that may or may not be functionally related, and at levels ranging all the way from the individual up to the state” (Bettinger 2003: 20).

Another problem is that memetic theory is mostly expounded by evolutionary theorists, and as such often overlooks achievements in other fields of cultural study. Boyd and Richerson (2000: 70) object to the idea that “cultural evolution can be explained in terms of natural selection alone. Instead scientists need to combine research from psychology, anthropology and linguistics to clarify the multiple processes that actually shape human culture”. Bloch similarly points out that much cultural evolutionary theory based on memes ignores existing academic literature on cultural change (in Auger 2001). Nevertheless, a broad evolutionary framework may provide the bridge between the social and natural sciences (Plotkin 2002). Complementing theories in other fields ultimately need to be incorporated into a theory of cultural evolution, and to this end the next chapter attempts to incorporate the concepts of discourse and genre in social semiotics and media studies into the current argument.

Objections to the emerging model of memes hold that “Darwinism may have little to tell us outside of biology” (Orr 1996: 471). As a result theorists often compromise by suggesting that cultural evolution is a “special case of selection” (Hull 2001: 5015). Wuketits (1990: 137) explains that “evolutionary epistemologists neither claim that cultural evolution obeys the same laws of principles as organic evolution nor do they contend that cultural evolution is unimportant in the attempt to explain (human) knowledge”. Even so, the possibility of a science of memetics remains contested among its proponents, and Dennett (1995: 369) admits that “the prospects for elaborating a rigorous science of memetics are doubtful”. Hull (1999) suggests holding problematic issues “off to the side while we attack those problems that seem more soluble. ... Once we get really good at handling them, then we can turn to the hardest parts”. To this end, the theory of memes draws from general selection theory (Cziko 1995) to determine the processes of cultural evolution and transformation.

3.3 The processes of cultural transformation

In general terms, evolution by natural selection can be said to occur “whenever heritable variants, cultural or otherwise, differ in ‘fitness’ – that is, whenever they differ in ways that affect the number of copies of each in the next generation” (Durham 1992: 343). In terms of culture, the three central aspects to this evolutionary process can be condensed to the transmission (replication or heredity), variation and differential fitness of memes (Dennett 1995). In other words cultural systems undergo transformation, or evolve, as a result of the dynamic interaction between these processes which “systematically affect the frequency of different variants in the population” (Boyd & Richerson 1985: 283). These processes illustrate the general model of cultural evolutionary theory and highlight the differences between biological and cultural evolution.

3.3.1 Cultural transmission

Transmission in the current argument refers in part to the replication of information. In this sense it can be said that genetic information is transmitted (mostly) through sexual reproduction. Memes are, by definition, culturally transmitted. Sperber (1996: 100) defines this transmission as “a process that may be intentional or unintentional, co-operative or non-co-operative, and which brings about a similarity of content between a mental representation in one individual and its causal descendant in another individual”. Humans may acquire information through several processes, including “habituation, imprinting, classical (Pavlovian) conditioning, operant (Skinnerian) conditioning, observational learning, and tuition” (Cloak 1975: 167). The concern here, however, is culturally transmitted information, which Tomasello et al. (1993: 495) refers to as cultural learning, “a uniquely human form of social learning that allows for a fidelity of transmission of behaviours and information among conspecifics”.⁸ Blackmore (1999)

⁸ Danchin et al. (2004: 489) emphasise the role of public information in “the transmission of behavioural patterns among individuals”. This is not viewed as an exclusively human ability, as Campbell (1974: 432) notes: “there are effective means of transmitting to other bees the successful outcomes of scout bee

limits the transmission of memes to imitation, and although this approach has been criticised (Boyd & Richerson in Aunger 2001) it distinguishes memes from genetically programmed behaviour and behaviour acquired through genetically based forms of learning (Lorenz 1981).⁹ Language greatly increases the efficiency of the transmission of cultural information “and forms the very basis of human culture” (Cavalli-Sforza 2000: 174).¹⁰

There are important differences between genetic and cultural transmission. While cultural transmission “differs from organic evolution with respect to tempo and rapidity” (Wuketits 1990: 141), the main difference between the two systems lies in the ‘horizontal’ and ‘oblique’ transmission of cultural information. Cavalli-Sforza (2000) proposes four ways in which cultural information may be transmitted: from parent to child (vertically down the genetic lineage), between two non-related individuals (horizontally across genetic lineages of the same generation, or obliquely between generations), from an individual to a group (‘one-to-many’) and from a group to an individual (‘many-to-one’ or ‘concordant pressure’). Boyd and Richerson (1985) suggest that since horizontal and oblique transmission breaks away from the genetic phylogeny it may give rise to cultural maladaptations (in the sense of not being genetically beneficial).

Transmission of cultural elements may result in a cumulative, ‘ratchet’ effect: “transmission links the memetic processing within an individual to not only memetic processing in other directly-encountered individuals, but processing in the individuals *they* encounter, and so on” (Gabora 1997). This raises the point that culture seems to evolve in a Lamarckian fashion, as Boyd and Richerson (1985: 283) note: “cultural

explorations in such a manner as to greatly reduce the total wasted exploratory effort over that required of solitary bees”.

⁹ Blackmore focuses on imitation as an intrinsic part of her definition of memes as “instructions for carrying out behaviour, stored in our brains (or other objects) and passed on by imitation” (1999: 43). She notes that “many human behaviours are complicated mixtures of innate, learned and imitated – for example, riding a bicycle” (Blackmore 2000: 66). Premack and Premack (1994) suggest that the effects of pedagogy, which they describe as uniquely human, may provide the distinguishing feature between animal and human culture. See *Glossary of terms*.

¹⁰ The descriptive character of language re-asserts the gene/culture split: “human language can convey information about a state of affairs, about a situation that may or may not be present or biologically relevant. It may not even exist” (Popper 1984: 247).

transmission differs from genetic transmission because it includes the inheritance of acquired variation”.¹¹

3.3.2 Variation and creativity

The second prerequisite for evolution to occur is that the competing elements must vary in a manner causally related to their replicative success. Biological evolution “progresses by the accumulation of many small mutations rather than by a few giant ones” (Zimmer 2001: 79). In terms of culture, Mesoudi et al. (2004: 3) cite studies that show that “the storage and transmission of cultural knowledge is far from perfect, and much variation is spontaneously introduced”. According to Gabora (1997) and Simonton (1999) however, the predominant source of variety in cultural evolution is bound to creativity and the creative process.

Findlay and Lumsden (1989: 425) define the creative process as “the array of mental activities involved in the formulation of a specific problem in an initially ill-defined problem domain, in advancing a novel or appropriate solution to an extant problem, or both”. Gabora (1997) describes this process as one of linking previously disassociated elements in existing knowledge, where “memes potentially relevant to a solution would evoke or activate another, altering or strategically (though not necessarily consciously) manipulating them”. She relates this process to a mathematical model of the cognitive processes involved in the storage and retrieval of memes. Simonton (1999) elaborates on Campbell’s (1960) notion of the creative process as one of blind variation and selective retention akin to Darwinian selection. He argues that, during the process, a variety of creative solutions are produced “which are then subjected to first cognitive and then sociocultural selection, retaining solely those ideas that are adaptive by some criteria of utility, truth, or beauty” (Simonton 1999: 322). This view emphasises the associative

¹¹ Plotkin (1998: 243) offers that “the obvious if rather unspectacular example is the history of the conservation and elaboration of stone tools over a period of hundreds of thousands of years of human evolution. The growth in the form and usage of computers in the last forty years is an example *par excellence* of a spectacular ratchet effect”.

nature of creativity and suggests that more creative individuals have a broader range of associations.

In apparent contrast to Simonton's (1999) view of creativity as akin to blind variation, it is often pointed out that cultural evolution "depends on human conscious activities that tend towards certain goals" (Wuketits 1990: 134) and that "variants are generated strategically" (Gabora 1997). This 'guided variation' is often hailed as a key difference between biological and cultural selection and leads to the assumption that cultural evolution accumulates adaptations at a greater tempo than biological evolution.¹² This discussion touches on issues of human intentionality and free will, which Dennett (2003: 13) describes as "an evolved creation of human activity and beliefs ... just as real as such other human creations as music and money".¹³ While the role of free will and goal oriented variation in the creative process must be considered, the number of possible solutions is restricted by the range of available memes.

3.3.3 Selection

The final aspect required for the process of evolution to occur is the editing process by which variant elements are selected for or against. In biological terms, selection pressures refer to environmental features that serve to constrain the reproductive successes of certain individuals over another. Wilson (1975: 594) offers food shortage, predation and competition as examples. In a similar sense memes are considered as competing with one another: "evidence that two or more cultural variants are indeed competing comes from testing the prediction that over time one variant will increase in frequency while another

¹² This stance seems to suggest that biological evolution is completely random. But while biological evolution has no foresight, as a process of cumulative selection it is constrained by its phylogenetic history, where "each successive change in the gradual evolutionary process was simple enough, *relative to its predecessor*, to have arisen by chance" (Dawkins 1991a: 43).

¹³ The assumption of intentional human consciousness raises philosophical problems of self, itself a matter of contention beyond the scope of this thesis (Solomon 1988). Blackmore (1999: 240) notes that "artists, writers and runners often say they are at their best when acting spontaneously and without self-consciousness. So selves have effects but not as the originators of conscious creativity," and Gabora (1997) offers that "despite the intuition that individuals control their streams of thought, creators often express surprise at the sudden appearance of an idea, and deny the active effort in its immediate creation".

shows a corresponding decrease” (Mesoudi et al. 2004: 3). Blackmore (1999: 37) invokes the meme’s eye view to “imagine a world full of hosts for memes (e.g. brains) and far more memes than can possibly find homes. Now ask, which memes are more likely to find a safe home and get passed on again?” In this way one may ask “which representations are the most successful at replicating, under what conditions, and why” (Sperber 1996: 101).

In trying to determine the process of cultural selection, Durham (1992: 345) suggests that “there are as many forms of cultural selection as there are kinds of decision making”. He identifies two methods of selection: selection by choice, where the carriers of a variant are its selectors, and selection by imposition, where the carriers and selectors are different groups of people. This is related to Boyd & Richerson’s (1985) suggestion that cultural transmission may be biased in a manner that affects the fitness of cultural variants. This ‘asymmetric’ transmission holds that “an offspring is disproportionately likely to acquire some variants” (Boyd & Richerson 1985: 134). Selection by choice is then related to direct (testing available variants) and indirect (adopting a variant based on its secondary properties) biased transmission. Selection by imposition is related to frequency-dependant (adopting the most popular variant) biased transmission. These biases are closely linked to both the transmission and selection of cultural variants, and along with the guided variation of culture may result in the accumulation of modifications that exemplify human culture. Another approach discusses the transmission of ideas as analogous to viral infection.¹⁴ Sperber’s (1996) ‘epidemiology of representations’ contrasts the memetic model with the notion of influence, where the selection of memes is a matter of degree, affected by the memes already present.

Ultimately cultural selection results “in memes being differentially propagated by copying and transmission processes which move the memes about in space, between people, and conserve them in time” (Plotkin 1998: 253). While this approach describes the general notion of selection, the specific mechanics by which memes are selected may

¹⁴ Dawkins (1991b) controversially describes religion as a ‘virus of the mind’. He suggests that “the Roman Catholic religion is a disease of the mind which has a particular epidemiology similar to that of a virus” (Miele 1995).

rely on multiple psychological processes which may be too complex to determine and are presently largely unknown. Referring to cultural artefacts, Simonton (1999: 321) argues that “it is very possible that neither the creator nor the evaluators of creative products have the capacity to discern the intricate configurational relations that are most conducive to success”.¹⁵

3.4 Graphic narratives as the visible products of cultural evolution

The memetic approach presented above suggests interactive distinctions between memes, neuronal configurations (or mental representations), behaviour and artefacts. The difficulty in locating the unit of cultural selection and transmission lies in the fact that “we seek cultural replicators without direct access to the content of human minds” (Pocklington and Best 1997: 80). We do, however, have direct access to the evidence of cultural replicators as manifested in cultural artefacts. Sperber and Hirschfeld (2001: cxxii) note that, “with the recent insistence on the role of artifacts in cognitive processes ... it has become common to acknowledge the cultural character of these artifacts: culture is not just in the mind”.

Artefacts may be broadly defined as “anything made by human workmanship” (Garmonsway 1965: 36).¹⁶ Memes are somehow carried – and may be transmitted – by artefacts such as books or films. Dennett (1995: 347) suggests that memes “are carried by meme vehicles – pictures, books, sayings (in particular languages, oral or written, on paper or magnetically encoded, etc.)”. Considering the problematic location of memes, Sperber (1996: 104) asks “whether the true memes are public productions – pots, texts,

¹⁵ Simonton (1999: 316) cites studies which suggest that “those periods in which the creator produces the most total works will be those in which the most outstanding works appear, including the single best contribution ... [C]reative individuals are not able to increase their hit rates, nor do the hit rates decline with age, nor even will they exhibit some curvilinear form ... [good and bad ideas] appear more or less randomly across careers, just as happens for genetic mutations and recombinations”.

¹⁶ See *Glossary of terms*.

songs and so on – that are both effects and causes of mental representations or ... mental representations that are both causes and effects of public productions”.¹⁷

Durham (1990: 194) notes that “historical derivation or descent remains a significant and revealing relationship among cultural systems”. Shennan (2002: 65) argues that the histories of artefacts represent these lineages, linked by descent, on which evolutionary processes “can operate, modifying their form and frequency. The agents of these processes are human individuals conducting their lives in the light of the cultural inheritances they have received, whose aggregate decisions, conscious or not, produce evolutionary patterns. ... In the case of artifacts not only are the individuals who make the decisions ‘interactors’, but so are the actual artifacts themselves”. In the light of these concerns and the memetic theory of cultural evolution, I propose that graphic narratives may be described as the visible products of the process of cultural evolution. I therefore argue that my analysis of graphic narratives presents an investigation into a cultural phylogeny.

3.5 Conclusion

By invoking a general theory of selection (Cziko 1995), a memetic theory of cultural evolution clarifies evolutionary epistemology’s distinction between genes and culture. Bearing in mind the difficulty in discerning the object of selection, units of cultural transmission are considered as “in a broad sense memes” (Hull 2001: 5016).

Subsequently culture is described as a system of heritable variation roughly analogous to, but evolving autonomously from, biological evolution.

Furthermore, theories of cultural evolution seek to “explain the ‘descent with modification’ of human cultures” (Durham 1990: 189). The evolutionary processes

¹⁷ Dawkins (1999) proposes that genes may extend their phenotypic expression beyond the boundaries of the organism in which they reside. In this sense he considers caddis houses, spider webs, beaver dams and termite mounds as ‘animal artefacts’, evolved by virtue of their genetic benefit to the organism.

through which cultural systems transform are defined as the transmission, variation and selection of cultural variants, or memes (Dennett 1995). The roles of language, cultural learning, imitation and creativity are central to these processes. It is due to these processes that cultural systems display a “cultural phylogeny” (Durham 1992: 331), or lineage of descent. Artefacts are considered here as the visible products of cultural evolution, representing these lineages (Shennan 2002). It is in this light that the graphic narratives in chapter five will be analysed.

An important objection to memetic theory is that its proponents are ignorant of academic literature on culture beyond their field, especially on cultural transformation (Bloch in Aunger 2001). With the intention of rectifying this shortcoming the next chapter will introduce concepts from the fields of social semiotics and media studies, focussing on the concepts of discourse (Van Leeuwen 2005) and genre (Lacey 2000), before turning to the analysis of three South African graphic narratives in chapter five.

Chapter 4: Discourse and genre

4.1 Introduction

At the end of the previous chapter I described cultural artefacts as the visible results of the process of cultural evolution. In this chapter I will suggest that the memetic theory of cultural evolution, founded on an evolutionary epistemological perspective on culture, may be usefully applied to the analysis of cultural artefacts by invoking the concepts of discourse and genre. These concepts seem to echo aspects of cultural evolutionary theory, and similarly describe socially shared systems of cultural information. Discourse and genre are associated in social semiotics, where discourse describes socially constructed systems of knowledge, while genre examines how semiotic resources are used to represent this knowledge (Van Leeuwen 2005). I will argue that these concepts may be used to discuss the evolution of units of culturally transmitted information, or memes. This chapter provides a brief literature review of contemporary discourse and genre theory, followed by an outline of the method of analysis which will be employed in the next chapter. Throughout this chapter I will attempt to link the concepts of discourse and genre to the evolutionary perspective on culture offered in the previous chapters. The combination of these fields may clarify the implications of a theory of cultural evolution on contemporary media and cultural studies. The hope is that such a combination may provide valuable insight into the analysis of cultural artefacts.

4.2 Social semiotics and discourse

The study of genre is often located in semiotics, where genre is “seen as a shared code between the producers and interpreters of texts included within it” (Chandler 1997). Semiotics is the study of signs, signification and signifying systems, and has its roots in linguistic theory (Harland 1999). Semiotics has been linked to social sciences through structural linguistics (Barthes 1970) and structural anthropology (Lévi-Strauss 1966). The use of semiotic analysis has expanded beyond the boundaries of linguistic theory to

address social systems of meaning, and by the end of the twentieth century semiotics came to represent “a virtual ‘key’ to the mind, to artistic and social praxis, and indeed to human existence generally” (Stam et al. 1992: 1). Social semiotics explores both “the material resources of communication and the way their uses are socially regulated” (Van Leeuwen 2005: 93). This approach focuses on communicative information (‘texts’, be it speech acts, non-verbal communication or mediated through media such as books, film or music) and how these relate to the social systems that shape them and which they in turn shape. The relationship between semiotic resources and social systems may be called discourse, which describes “how semiotic resources are used to construct representations of what is going on in the world” (Van Leeuwen 2005: 91).

According to Blommaert (2005: 3), discourse comprises “all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural and historical patterns and developments of use”. Foucault (1969: 131) offers that discursive practices are subject to “a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function”.¹ The development of discourses, then, is subject to specific social contexts, and different discourses may hold different opinions and conceptions of the same knowledge (Gee 2005). In this way discourse may guide and limit the range of possible statements one can make in that discourse, and in this way dictate the manner in which genres depict knowledge. I suggest that discourses may be considered as complexes of memes, or Dawkins’ (1989: 197) “co-adapted stable set of mutually-assisting memes”.² These complexes supposedly form when memes combine for mutual benefit, analogous to symbiotic relationships in nature. These complexes may then influence the inclusion or exclusion of other memes. In this sense discourse is the set of memes of a given social context that, through genre, influences the manifestation of memes in cultural artefacts. The implementation of discursive information is the focus of genre studies (Lacey 2000).

¹ One of Foucault’s (1969) contributions was to consider discourses in terms of ideology and sites of power.

² Dawkins (1989: 197) regards an organized church, “with its architecture, rituals, laws, music, art, and written tradition” as an example of such a co-adapted meme complex.

According to Van Leeuwen (2005: 91) “the concept of ‘genre’ is the key to studying how semiotic resources are used to enact communicative interactions”. These resources and the manner of their application are dictated by discourse. In general terms, genres refer to types of texts that are grouped together. The concept of genre has its roots in linguistic theory, specifically in literary theory (Dubrow 1982), but has since come to encompass much more than the description of literary categories.³ In order to simplify this study I define genres after Ryall (cited in Lacey 2000: 132) as the patterns, forms, styles and structures “which transcend individual art products, and which supervise both their construction by artists and their reading by audiences”. I will focus on genre as a means of categorising works of fiction, specifically visual narratives such as film or graphic narratives, according to their conventionalised properties. Genre analysis generally focuses on the textual similarities and differences between individual texts that may or may not belong to a specific genre (Lacey 2000). I suggest that these similarities and differences point indirectly to the presence or absence of cultural units of transmission, or memes. In this sense the conventional nature of genres represents sets of memes that have increased their fitness by combining together.⁴

4.3 Genre

The concept of genre is historically associated with literary theory, where “genre means a type or class of literature” (Peck & Coyle 1993: 1). In this sense genre “alludes to literary types and hence theoretically could be applied to lyric, tragedy, the novel, the sonnet, drawing room comedy and so on” (Dubrow 1982: 4). Further distinctions of varying degrees have been considered, such as “drama, novel, lyric; tragedy, comedy, satire; epigram, sonnet, elegy; pastoral, picaresque novel, Gothic novel; science fiction, swords-

³ Bhatia (2004: 23) offers a broad definition of genre as “language use in a conventionalized communicative setting in order to give expression to a specific set of communicative goals of a disciplinary or social institution, which give rise to stable structural forms by imposing constraints on the use of lexico-grammatical as well as discursal resources”.

⁴ The *Genre Evolution Project* of Michigan State University is conducting an evolutionary analysis of the American science fiction magazine short story. While they suggest that “cultural creations evolve in the same way as biological organisms” (Rabkin & Simon 2004), they do not explicitly refer to a theory of cultural evolution.

and-sorcery, Utopian fiction” (Harland 1999: 253). The definition of specific genres is contentious, however, as they are generally defined in hindsight and often texts do not wholly conform to one particular genre. Chandler (1997) notes that, despite these problems, “even if theorists were to abandon the concept, in everyday life people would continue to categorize texts”. An area where the term genre is most often used in the vernacular is in reference to films – Jameson (1994: ix) notes that “the idea [of genre] is second nature to the movies and our awareness of them”.

According to Todorov (1990: 18) “a genre, whether literary or not, is nothing other than the codification of discursive properties”. In this sense genres are categorised according to the similarity or difference between these codified and discursive properties, which may be characteristics of content, form and function.⁵ The conventional nature of genre is more closely related to Saussure’s *la langue* as a socially shared system of language, with genre texts being more akin to *parole*, the individual speech acts made possible by *la langue* (Lacey 2000). This distinction echoes Simpson’s (2003: 74) definition of genre as “an abstract realisation of a linguistically-achieved activity type, derived out of configurations of register but transcending register by giving shape to patterns of interaction that are adaptable to many different contexts of situations”. The adaptation, appropriation and recontextualisation of genres will be discussed below.

4.3.1 Genre and discourse

Genre studies in social semiotics look at the way semiotic resources are implemented. The types of resources available and the manner of their implementation are considered as being influenced by discourse. This means that genres may betray their discourses of origin, as Dubrow (1982: 4) notes: “much like a firmly rooted institution, a well-established genre transmits certain cultural attitudes, attitudes which it is shaped by and

⁵ Van Leeuwen (2005) offers that the Western may be seen as a genre of content, the string quartet as a genre of form, and advertising as a genre of function, but combinations of these are also possible. Chandler (1997) suggests that the thematic grouping of genres may be inadequate, as it ignores *how* the theme is presented. This point again raises the difficulty in defining genres.

in turn helps to shape". Todorov (1990: 19) writes that "each epoch has its own system of genres, which stands in some relation to the dominant ideology, and so on. Like any other institution, genres bring to light the constitutive features of the society to which they belong".⁶ In my analysis I will consider genre to reflect the discourse from which it originates, keeping in mind that a genre may reciprocally influence its discourse. Mirzoeff (1999: 24) relates cultural production to discourse in the sense that "culture is where people define their identity and that it changes in accord with the needs of individuals and communities to express that identity".⁷

If one considers discourse from an evolutionary epistemological perspective, in other words as stable sets of co-adapted mutually-assisting memes, genres may be seen as replicating the memes present in the relevant discourse. Of course, as discourses change, so do genres, and I will show how changes in the political climate of South Africa had a direct influence on the depiction of the Border war in South African graphic narratives.

4.3.2 Genres as systems of conventionalised codes

Genres exist as systems of conventionalised codes, where meaning is derived from the relationship between the constituent elements. Lévi-Strauss considers that the "constituent elements of myth, like those of language, have no fixed meaning in themselves, but only acquire meaning in relation to other elements" (Stam et al. 1992: 19). The conventionalised elements of genres function both as "'horizons of expectation' for readers and as 'models of writing' for authors" (Todorov 1990: 18). Dubrow (1982: 2) similarly describes genre as functioning "much like a code of behaviour established

⁶ As example, Lacey (2000: 238) suggests that George Romero's zombie films "can be seen as critiques of consumerism: zombies wander around a shopping mall very [much] like normal shoppers". Romero himself considers his film *Land of the Dead* (2005) as social commentary: "I've basically just been trying to reflect the times, not only in the messages of the film, but stylistically as well" (Chainsaw 2005: 80).

⁷ An interesting example of this can be found in the American adaptation of the original Japanese *Godzilla* (1954) into *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* (1954). The original film is often described as reflecting on the atomic bomb and the American occupation of Japan: "it seems logical that Godzilla symbolises America. It is for this reason that *Godzilla* is released in an adapted form in America. ... Through the application of minor adjustments, Godzilla once again becomes the monster that symbolises the dangerous unknown and that part of the world still untouched by Western civilization" (Hulsing 1998: 24, author's translation).

between the author and his reader". Films are often labelled and marketed according to generic properties: action, adventure, romantic comedy, romantic comedy-drama, and so on. Simpson (2003: 179-180) notes that "promotional material for new releases will deliberately place the film in a 'tag-line' which signals its particular generic slot ... [and seeks] strongly to privilege certain directions in text-processing".⁸

In the sense that genres provide templates for film directors, Schiff (1994: xiv) notes that the genre directors of the 1940s and 1950s "would pooh-pooh the notion that they were *artistes*. They spoke of themselves the way troupers (or troopers) might. There was a job to be done and, by God, they were there to do it. It's hard to imagine a Francis Coppola or a Paul Schrader talking that way". More recently, as Chandler (1997) notes, "literary and film theorists have accorded more importance to genre, counteracting the ideology of authorial primacy". Recent genre-conscious directors appropriate and transform established genres, as exemplified by Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994).⁹

If one is to accept a memetic view of culture, the conventionalised codes and constituent elements of genre evokes the concepts of cultural transmission and selective retention. I suggest the constituent elements of genres to be akin to memes, and genres as systems of memes associated by increasing one another's replicative fitness. An example would be the constituent elements of the vampire genre, "such as the vampire's aversion to garlic, sunlight and crucifixes" (Lacey 2000: 135). It may be that these elements enhance one another's replicative fitness when presented in such a relation to one another.

Furthermore, genres may also be considered as a form of 'cultural niche-construction' (after Odling-Smee et al. 2003), altering the cultural environment in which memes are presented and reinforcing the fitness of both works and conventions of the genre.

⁸ Simpson (2003: 180) provides as example the Australian film *Muriel's wedding* (1994) which was received as "a bleak story, suffused with hopelessness" before being labelled as a 'comedy romance' by a marketing campaign which emphasised its 'feel-good' comedic qualities. It subsequently achieved commercial success as a comedy.

⁹ The authorial role of genre production is reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss' bricoleur (1966: 18) who "has to turn back to an already existent set made up of tools and materials, to consider or reconsider what it contains and, finally and above all to engage in a sort of dialogue with it and, before choosing between them, to index the possible answers which the whole set can offer to his problem".

4.3.3 The transformation and appropriation of genres

Genres are not static, but constantly undergo change. Lacey (2000: 225) notes that “there are cycles that conform to a genre’s rise and decline in popularity; genres also possess a ‘life’ cycle”.¹⁰ Although we identify and conceptualise genres “in pure forms, in the real world they are often seen in hybrid, mixed and embedded forms” (Bhatia 2004: 25).

Genres may become extinct and new genres may come into existence, almost always as a result of “the transformation of an earlier one, or of several: by inversion, by displacement, by combination” (Todorov 1990: 15). The transformation of genres may be best illustrated by films that hybridise existing genres and sub-genres to form new genres. Lacey (2000: 217) considers the rise of the ‘super-genre’, which defies narrow categorisation, noting that Scott’s “*Blade Runner* [1982] is a mix of film noir and science fiction; it also contains chase and fight (kinetic) sequences that characterise the action movie”.¹¹ In this way genres may be appropriated and recontextualised for different purposes than initially intended. The appropriation of genres must be seen as “legitimate and creative extensions of available linguistic and generic resources and not necessarily breaches or flouting of conventions” (Bahtia 2004: 158).

The transformation of genres, whether by inversion, displacement or combination, describes the ways in which the constituent elements of genres and their relation to the relevant discourse are reconfigured. To rephrase this in terms of cultural evolutionary theory, the transformation of genres point to evolved adaptations that affect their cultural fitness. It is evolutionary in the sense that the rise, fall and transformation of genres are reminiscent of the evolutionary process of blind variation and selective retention. It is also pertinent to consider that genres may transform according to shifts in their relevant discourses, which alters the selective cultural environment. Such a ‘meme’s eye view’ considers the relation between the genre and its original discourse but focuses on the

¹⁰ Schiff (1994: xiii) notes that, in spite of a resurgence of Westerns in the 1980s, “a whole genre – perhaps the greatest – had died, and there was nothing anyone in Hollywood could do about it”. Despite an even later revival, represented by *Dances with wolves* (1991) and *Unforgiven* (1993), the Western may never relive its glory enjoyed during the 1940s and 1950s.

¹¹ Lacey (2000) cites Lucas’ *Star Wars* (1977), a mixture of science fiction, Western and fairy tale genres, as a turning point in the use of genre in film.

replicative success of the constituent memes, even under different circumstances or discourses.

4.4 Genre analysis

What follows is an outline of the method of analysis that I will employ in the next chapter. I will not argue that the three works belong to one genre, but hope that by referring to common generic conventions I can isolate discursive and generic factors that may be considered as illustrating the theory of cultural evolution. While there are different approaches to analysing genre, the most typical being a textual investigation, Bhatia (2004: 25) notes that “comprehensive analyses tend to employ a variety of tools, including textual analyses, ethnographic techniques, cognitive procedures, computational analysis and critical awareness, to name only a few”.

Bearing in mind the theory of cultural evolution and memes, I will combine aspects of Bhatia (2004), Lacey (2000) and Van Leeuwen’s (2005) methods of genre analysis. After introducing the works I will briefly discuss their formal properties. All three works take the form of a graphic narrative, which I define after McCloud (1993: 9) as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer”.¹² The most important formal difference between the works is that *Grensvegter* 48 (Republican Press 1976) makes use of photographs, whereas both *Bomfok* (Botes 1994) and *So stil soos ’n landmyn* (Du Plessis & Du Plessis 2004) are illustrated. Graphic narratives, as a homogenous art form, makes use of several conventions (Kannemeyer 1998),¹³ and I will briefly mention possible antecedents to each work.

Following the introduction, I will contextualise the works after Bhatia (2004) and consider the influence of discourse after Van Leeuwen (2005). Finally I will investigate

¹² See *Glossary of terms*.

¹³ I assume the nature of graphic narrative conventions after McCloud (1993) and Kannemeyer (1998), and will focus mainly on their application.

the textual properties of the works after Lacey (2000). I will end each analysis with a summary of the relevant issues.

4.4.1 Contextualisation

As the works I aim to analyse arise from different time periods (1976, 1994 and 2004), it is deemed important to contextualise each work. This is motivated by the suggestion that genre analysis has shifted to consider the “more complex and dynamic aspects of discourse construction and interpretation ... [O]ne is required to account for not only the use of textual genres, but also the way they influence and are in turn influenced by the recipients of discourse, including their attitudes, opinions, decisions and identities” (Bhatia 2004: 155). I will discuss the subject matter and basic themes of each work. As all the works depict, to varying degrees, the so-called Border War of 1975 to 1988, I will provide a brief synopsis of issues pertaining to the war. I will briefly consider the general political climate of each period, referring to attitudes towards the Border war and the patriotic and patriarchal values of Afrikaner identity.¹⁴ By contextualising the works I hope to identify the discursive influences apparent in the works. In the current argument the influence of discourse on genre addresses the discursive set of memes and their manifestation in works of genre. Van Leeuwen (2005) explicitly considers the content of genre as an aspect of discourse.

4.4.2 Textual analysis

Lacey (2000) considers the important aspects of a textual analysis of genre to be the narrative, character, setting, iconography, and style of the works. Isolating these elements “allows us to identify how closely individual texts follow the norm or in what way they diverge” (Lacey 2000: 210). It is possible that this may bring to light the presence or

¹⁴ Afrikaner identity is considered here in terms of ‘Afrikaner nationalism’. See *Glossary of terms*.

absence of memes and indicate their replicative success. These aspects will be instrumental to the textual analysis of the works in the next chapter, and I briefly discuss them here.

Narrative: The term narrative generally refers to stories. A narrative may be considered as comprised of both the plot, the narrative as explicitly presented by the text, and the story, “the chronological order of all events explicitly presented *and* inferred by the text” (Lacey 2000: 16). Propp’s analysis of the structure of Russian folktales has been applied to the classical Westerns, revealing a similarly generic storyline (Stam et al. 1992). I will summarise the narratives and attempt to discern their relation to the discourse suggested in the contextualisation. I will also discuss the similarities and differences between the narratives of the works.

Characters: Lacey (2000: 137) notes that “many genres have characters who can be classed as generic types; these can be stereotypical or specific to a genre”. Nachbar and Lause (1992: 237) note that the concept of a stereotype

is a valuable tool in the analysis of popular culture because once the stereotype has been identified and defined, it automatically provides us with an important and revealing expression of otherwise hidden beliefs and values. This means that stereotypes are especially useful in tracing the evolution of popular thought – the way in which the beliefs and values associated with specific groups change over time.

I will briefly discuss the important characters in each work and consider whether their depiction presents them as stereotypical characters. The complexity of their characterisation may classify characters as one-, two- or three-dimensional (after Rabkin and Simon 2004). I will also discuss the relation between the characters and the discourse suggested in the contextualisation.

Setting: Setting simply refers to “the location in terms of place (space) and time” (Lacey 2000: 138). The three works generally share the Namibian/Angolan border and a similar

point in time as their predominant setting. I will investigate the similarities and differences between the depictions of the setting, again taking into consideration the relevant discourse associated with each work.

Iconography: “Iconography refers to objects, or sounds, which are associated with a genre” (Lacey 2000: 138). I will attempt to determine similarities or differences between the works in terms of shared iconography. I will consider that the use of iconography may be associated with the discursual influences on the works, or merely be conventionalised elements.

Style: Style refers to various stylistic characteristics of genre works. I will briefly discuss the visual styles of each work and will specifically consider the use of language. Although all three graphic narratives are in Afrikaans, the differing linguistic styles may indicate alternate attitudes towards the relevant discourses.

4.5 Limitations of the research method

The most important limitation to the analysis suggested above is the contested status of memetics as a science, even among its proponents (Aunger 2001). It may be that we never ‘find a meme’ and that the idea remains closer to an interesting analogy than a proper scientific practice. At the moment memetic theory insufficiently addresses the many psychological and cognitive processes that may be involved in the experience of culture. Nevertheless, if the theory of memetics has any validity, I suggest that the production of cultural artefacts, and the artefacts themselves, can be insightfully investigated from an evolutionary perspective. It is with this hope that I attempt this admittedly limited investigation.

I do not take into consideration the economic aspect of cultural production. The *Grensvegter* series was very popular, and was published for approximately 23 years by Republican Press (Botes 1998). Some photocomic titles reached average monthly sales

figures of 180 000 copies (Botha 2005). *Grensvegter* may thus be seen as a more commercial venture than *Bitterkomix*, an independent publisher of alternative graphic narratives with a considerably smaller distribution and print run. Chandler (1997) suggests that the viability of “economic factors may account for the perpetuation of a profitable genre”. I do not address these important factors.

Another limitation is my brief contextualisation of the political climate surrounding the publication of each work. Because of spatial considerations I do not fully explore the intricate American, Soviet, Cuban, Portuguese and sub-Saharan political influences on the Border war (see Gleijeses 2003 for a detailed discussion of the international politics surrounding the Border war). In a similar way my contextualisation of post-apartheid South Africa may exclude pertinent information.

Finally, owing to the limited scope of this thesis, I consider a relatively narrow range of works. A more thorough investigation would evaluate a wider range of works, including, perhaps, the entire *Grensvegter* series. An additional obstacle is the relatively limited number of studies conducted on the South African photocomics.¹⁵ A more thorough understanding of South African photocomics may bring to light issues pertinent to the current study.

4.6 Conclusion

Social semiotics considers the concepts of discourse and genre to be intricately related (Van Leeuwen 2005). In this view, discourses are seen as bodies of knowledge about the world, and genres as the manner in which this discursive information is presented. As such discourse has an influence on the information related by genre.

¹⁵ Twigg (1996) suggests that “while studies in ‘pop-culture’ and ‘mass culture’ have been willing to engage with so-called ‘low genres’ (the Television Soap Opera, the Western paperback novel, the Slasher film *et al*), the photocomic has often been excluded from critical attention”.

I have attempted to link this conception of discourse and genre to an evolutionary epistemological perspective on culture. To this end I described discourses as stable sets of co-adapted, mutually-assisting memes (after Dawkins 1989) that are associated by strengthening one another's replicative successes. These memes are transmitted through genre, itself a set of conventions that may be considered as akin to a stable set of mutually-assisting memes. The creation and transformation of genres may be seen as an evolutionary process of blind variation and selective retention of memes.

From this evolutionary perspective I have constructed a method to analyse graphic narratives, based on genre analysis. This method includes a brief introduction to the formal characteristics of the works, followed by a contextualisation of the works in order to investigate the discourses they represent (Bhatia 2004). Finally, a textual analysis of the narrative, characters, settings, iconography and style may illuminate the conventional elements of the works (Lacey 2000). In summary, I will consider that discourse and genre represent the cultural evolution of memes. Taking into consideration the limitations of such an analysis, I propose that cultural evolutionary theory may be combined with the concepts of discourse and genre to lay the foundation for an evolutionary analysis of graphic narratives.

Chapter 5: Three South African graphic narratives

5.1 Introduction

In chapter two I discussed how an evolutionary epistemological perspective on culture can lead to theories of cultural evolution. These theories generally consider the transformation of culture as an evolutionary process (Durham 1990). One of these theories defines a hypothetical unit of cultural transmission as a meme (Dawkins 1989). It is in this sense that I suggested that cultural artefacts may be considered as the visible products of the process of cultural evolution. I have attempted to link the theory of memes with the concepts of discourse and genre in social semiotics (Van Leeuwen 2005). Building on this argument I have outlined a method of analysis based on genre analysis, which includes contextualising the works (Bhatia 2004) and investigating their textual properties (Lacey 2000). The hypothesis is that this method of analysis may illustrate the evolution of culture by identifying the evolutionary characteristics of cultural artefacts. In this chapter I apply this method to analyse three South African graphic narratives.

5.2 Selection of works

The selection of works is motivated by the hypothesis that cultural evolutionary theory is most usefully applied to “culturally homogenous societies or ‘ethnolinguistic populations’” (Durham 1990: 332), and that specific discourses may be isolated by “identifying relatively homogenous ‘reference groups’ within the whole, and then by analyzing cultural dynamics within and between them” (Durham 1992: 341). As a result of these considerations I will analyse three Afrikaans graphic narratives that depict, to varying degrees, the so-called Border war of 1975-1988. The three works are *Rocco de Wet, Grensvegter 48: net een keer terug* (Republican Press 1976), *Bomfok: liefde vir die vyand deel 4* (Botes 1994) and *So stil soos 'n landmyn* (Du Plessis & Du Plessis 2004).¹

¹ These titles may be translated as *Rocco de Wet, Border warrior 48: return only once* (Republican Press 1976), *Bombfuck: love for the enemy part 4* (Botes 1994) and *As quiet as a landmine* (Du Plessis & Du

5.3 Rocco de Wet, *Grensvegter* 48: net een keer terug (1976)

Grensvegter 48 (Republican Press 1976, hereafter *GV*) appears as a 193×135mm, 100 page saddle-stitched paperback with a full-colour cover and black and white interior. The story is related by text in speech bubbles, thought bubbles and captions superimposed over photographs. There are generally two to three panels per page, while the final page features a single concluding panel. The issue number appears on the cover and the bottom left corner of page three, but it is not dated.² The writers, photographers and actors are not credited. The title of the story appears on the inside front cover along with the introduction: “The two Russians wanted to betray their own people. Everything seemed convincing. But could Rocco de Wet trust them...?” (*GV*: 2, Figure 1).

The *Grensvegter* series, which ran from 1972 to 1995, was but one of many photocomic titles published by Republican Press since the 1960s (Hopkins 2003).³ By the early 1980s as many as 400 000 photocomics were sold every month, suggesting “a regular reading public of between three and four million” (Scholtz cited in Botes 1998: 3). The rise of photocomics is sometimes linked to a governmental decision not to introduce television to South Africa in 1964, and its decline to the introduction of television in 1975 (Botha 2005). Most of the titles may be classified as belonging to either the romance or adventure genre (Makkink 2004).

The appearance of photocomics in South Africa forms part of a global phenomenon, originating from the Italian *fotonovela*, or *fotoromanzi*, of the 1940s (Castelli 2005).⁴ Photocomics have appeared in France, Spain and Latin America, and continue to be popular in Italy and Mexico (Navar & Agrasánchez 2005). Photocomics have recently

Plessis 2004). While I will refer to these works by their original Afrikaans titles, all Afrikaans terms and quotes will be translated into English. In order to discuss the use of language, which is often parochially bound to specific contexts, the translations will be as literal as possible. Where deemed necessary I will include the original Afrikaans in the footnotes.

² I date issue 48 to appear in September 1976 after Botes’ (1998) chronology of the series.

³ According to Botes (1998) the original title *Dan Pienaar*, *Grensvegter* was changed to *Rocco de Wet*, *Grensvegter* from issue 36, following a change of actor and character.

⁴ Dianne (2005), an actress who appears in *Tessa*, *Keur*, *Swart Luipe* and more, suggests that some South African photocomics were translated and published in Italy, and recalls that “to be in photo stories in Italy was very highly thought of”.

been used in Botswana and Lesotho as educational tools to inform the public about HIV/Aids and the benefits of collective investments (I need to know 2005, Lesotho: using photocomics ... 2005). A recent fashion catalogue taking the form of a photocomic makes reference to the sexual undertones of early photocomics (Hall 2005).⁵

5.3.1 Contextualisation

Grensvegter 48 makes reference to the South African military intervention in the Angolan civil war during the period 1975 to 1976. In South Africa this conflict, which continued until 1988, is often referred to as the 'Border war', where "the term 'border' refers to the frontier between Angola and South West Africa (now Namibia)" (Holt 2005: 1). South Africa ruled over South West Africa after a League of Nations decree in 1919, and the South African Police (SAP) clashed with the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) liberation movement during the 1960s (Saunders & Southey 1998). By 1974 the liberation struggle in Angola expanded as the Portuguese empire crumbled after a coup in Lisbon (Hodges 2001). Following the outbreak of civil war, Cuba and the Soviet Union sent tens of thousands of troops and millions of dollars' worth of armoured cars, rocket launchers and heavy artillery pieces in support of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) (Breytenbach 1980). In October 1975 the South African Defence Force (SADF), with the support of the Uniao das Populacoes de Angola (UNITA) and the Frente Nacional de Libertação (FNLA), entered Angola and engaged with Cuban and MPLA troops under the mantle of Operation Savannah (Spies 1989). Ostensibly Operation Savannah was expanded to prevent the establishment of a communist government in Luanda. Giliomee (2003: 572) suggests that South Africa "only entered into the fray after the Ford administration in Washington had asked it to play the role of US proxy in a remote Cold War hot spot". By November 1975, however, the MPLA proclaimed itself to govern Angola (Kapuściński 1987). Operation

⁵ The South African photocomics were sometimes referred to as 'poesboekies', literally 'pussy books', a reference to their sexually suggestive content (Walker 2004a). The suggestive depiction of actresses in bikinis and high-heels is exemplified by the title *Tessa* (Botes 1998). Republican Press also published *Scope*, "the infamous and quintessential apartheid-era girlie magazine" (Makkink 2004). Botes (1998) focuses on sex and race as systems of domination in the titles *Tessa*, *Grensvegter*, *Supermask* and *She*.

Savannah concluded with the withdrawal of the remaining forces from Angola by late March 1976 (Spies 1989).⁶

Giliomee (2003: 573) notes that “for nearly six months the South African public was kept largely in the dark about what had happened”.⁷ By the end of January 1976 Minister of Defence P.W. Botha justified the intervention by claiming “it is clear that Angolans would be murdered and the infrastructure of the country destroyed in Russia’s attempts to enslave Southern Africa. ... The free world must stand together to prevent Russian intervention in the affairs of Africa. The free world can and must wake up out of its death sleep” (Notes in the house... 1976: 1). Giliomee (2003: 574) notes that “the South African propaganda machinery heavily emphasized the communist threat, but the extent of the Cuban involvement was only known to a few”. Breytenbach (2002: 33) echoes the anti-communist sentiment, holding that “only South Africa held the line between communist expansion to the north and a capitalist civilization to the south”. The image this evokes is described with irony by Kapuściński (1987: 100-101): “a million-strong Cuban army stands on the border of South Africa. There, in the dry bush, among barefoot tribes fleeing in panic, in that place without roads, without lights, without schools, without cities – there, the fate of contemporary civilization is being decided”.

Schiff (1994: xiv) notes that “the modest adherence to genre belongs to another age, when traditional codes of honour – macho values, patriotic values, even paramilitary values – were fashionable”. The influence of these codes of honour on South African photocomics is often pointed out. Twiggs (1996) regards the South African photocomics as ‘mirrors of nationalist day-dreams’, noting that most adventure photocomics were

⁶ Nortje (2003) dates the final withdrawal of Operation Savannah to late January 1976. The co-author of *So stil soos 'n landmyn* (Du Plessis & Du Plessis 2004) was a conscripted troop involved in the late withdrawal phase of Operation Savannah in early 1976. The SADF involvement in Angola continued until 1988 when Angola, Cuba and South Africa jointly signed the Brazzaville and New York Accords and agreed to withdraw all Cuban and South African forces from Angola (Hodges 2001).

⁷ The local press was not allowed to report on troop movements without permission from the Department of Defence, while foreign newspapers had reported on the ‘silent invasion’ as early as October 1975 (Spies 1989). Holt (2005: 3-4) suggests that “the clandestine nature of this intervention was primarily due to the South African government’s already poor image on the international stage – an image based on a poor human rights record through the implementation of apartheid policies and the banning of black liberation movements”.

produced in “a time of extreme anxiety for the types represented in the photocomic. The ‘reality’ of external threat to the white male was then at its apex, the fear of attack from ‘black hordes’ and ‘savages’ something to actively fight as an idea”. Martin (in Botha 2005: 9) contextualises the *Grensvegter* series in a decade characterised by “draconian and paranoid legislation against Communism and terrorism”.⁸ This background goes some way to explain the description of the Russian villain in *Grensvegter* as “full of horror and evil. He is a consummate communist, and he hates South Africa” (*GV*: 20).⁹ These anti-communist sentiments had a direct impact on the depiction of the Border war in the *Grensvegter* series, which in a sense serves to re-establish the prevailing social discourse of South Africa circa 1976. Van Leeuwen (2005: 94) notes that “there *are* wars and they *do* cause enormous suffering. But our *knowledge* of them is necessarily constructed in and through discourse, and is socially specific. ... [This socially specific discourse] serves the interests of the country or countries in which relevant texts are produced, and hence usually leaves out or backgrounds such things as aerial bombardments and civilian casualties”.¹⁰

5.3.2 Textual analysis

The narrative of *Grensvegter* 48 is linear and may be summarised as follows: The hero, Rocco de Wet, runs into the enemy during his return from a successful mission in Angola. After dealing with the problem he returns, via Windhoek and Pretoria, to his beach house. While on vacation, however, he is contacted by brigadier Flikflooï from

⁸ Author’s translation.

⁹ Originally “vol gruwels en booshede. Hy is ’n deurtrapte kommunist, en hy haat Suid-Afrika” (*GV*: 20).

¹⁰ Jameson (1994: 263) notes that “Hollywood made only one Vietnam film (John Wayne’s *The Green Berets*, ’68) during the conflict itself. ... Only after the withdrawal of the last ‘American advisers’ and the fall of Saigon in 1975 did Hollywood gear up for the first and then a second wave of movies portraying the war directly”. These two waves are represented by Cimino’s *The Deer Hunter* (1978) and Stone’s *Platoon* (1986). Giliomee (2003: 593) notes that “from the entanglement in the conflict in Namibia and Angola a new genre developed, called *grensliteratuur* or frontier literature”. The initial wave of *grensliteratuur* can be represented by Steyn (1976) and Strachan (1984). As far as I can establish, *Grensvegter* was depicted fighting Russian and Cuban soldiers inside Angola as early as 1976. Furthermore, South African troops had ready access to the *Grensvegter* series. Walker (2004a) recalls reading photocomics while stationed on the border and wondering whether the heroes “were really out there doing dirty deeds while we were being fed propaganda about how good the SADF and SAP were”.

Pretoria and summoned on another mission. He contacts two Russian defectors, Tanja Petrof and Joera Mitisj, and they travel by military helicopter to Southern Tanzania to confront major Malik, also known as the 'Red Major'. A battle with an enemy group ensues and Joera captures one of the enemy soldiers. They arrive at a bridge, at which point Rocco is betrayed by Tanja and Joera and captured by major Malik. Rocco is taken to the terrorists' headquarters, hung from a tree by his hands and tortured. The major hopes to break Rocco's spirit and convince him to join the terrorists. That evening the Russians celebrate their victory while Rocco lies locked up in a prison cell. At this point Tanja has a change of heart and decides to help Rocco escape. Before she is able to do so, however, Rocco manages to escape on his own. They escape into the bush, and Rocco defeats their pursuers one by one. Eventually Rocco's magazine runs empty and he assaults the major by hand. They arrive back at the bridge where Rocco was captured earlier, and Rocco beats the major unconscious, knocking him off the bridge. The major falls to his death into the river below. Rocco and Tanja reunite and share a reflective moment. They go their separate ways after sharing a kiss.

This story conforms to Botes' (1998: 26-29) summary of the typical storyline of the *Grensvegter* series, which he notes is rarely deviated from: "a crisis situation develops in one of South Africa's neighbouring countries, Rocco de Wet is summoned by the defence force and instructed to solve the crisis by crossing the border and destroying the enemy and/or enemy base. A female hostage is often involved, whom Rocco must return to safety".¹¹ The opening sequence in Angola, the summons from Pretoria, the deployment by helicopter, the final unarmed battle with the main villain and the concluding romantic sequence are all typical of the series.

The story may generally be viewed as a typical adventure genre photocomic. The depiction of Rocco's character and politics reflects patriarchal and anti-communist sentiments, and the negative stereotyping of the female spy and the Russian villains serves to reinforce these sentiments. It may also be that the bush setting serves to

¹¹ Author's translation.

emphasise the struggle between wilderness and civilization. In this sense *Grensvegter* 48 reflects its discourse of origin.

The main characters may be considered as the hero Rocco de Wet, the female spy Tanja Petrof and the villainous Russians, epitomised by major Malik. Rocco de Wet, the hero of the story, is summarised by Joera's reflection that "the name Grensvegter strikes terror into the hearts of those who sympathise with Russia, Red China, Cuba and the supporters of the Revolution. No man is feared more than him" (*GV*: 13). He is described as an "intrepid warrior" (*GV*: 33) and a "hardy, strong country boy" (*GV*: 44) who fights like a "raging lion" (*GV*: 33).¹² While he is a lone figure and prefers to combat on his own,¹³ he is the object of Tanja's admiration. She notes "what a man! He knows no fear, and nothing can surprise him!" (*GV*: 34). The near martyrdom of Rocco serves to emphasise his heroic qualities. Ultimately Rocco may be classified as a two-dimensional character (after Rabkin & Simon 2004) in that his actions are predictable and his motivations simple, notwithstanding the suggestion that "nobody really knows Vegter" (*GV*: 48). Rocco may be described as a stereotype of a white Afrikaans male. In this sense Rocco's character reflects the patriarchal society of 1970s white South Africa, while his politics reflects the anti-communist sentiments of the nationalist government.

The female character Tanja Petrof may similarly be classified as a two-dimensional character (after Rabkin & Simon 2004). Her depiction conforms to Botes' (1998: 28) observation that the female characters in the *Grensvegter* series either take on the role of "a spy who becomes a female victim by being kidnapped or captured by the enemy, or that of a spy who infiltrates the enemy base by presenting herself as a communist".¹⁴ For the most part Tanja takes on the role of a female victim and Rocco's romantic interest, and her portrayal highlights the patriarchal social structure of 1970s South Africa. Rocco describes her as "something for the eye" (*GV*: 11), and she is largely dependant on Rocco

¹² Originally "onverskrokke vegter" (*GV*: 33), "taai, sterk boerseun" (*GV*: 44) and "briesende leeu" (*GV*: 33).

¹³ This 'lone warrior' sentiment is reflected by Prime Minister John Voster's statement that "South Africa learned the lesson in Angola that, when it comes to the worst, he stands alone" (S.A. leer les in Angola... 1976: 1, author's translation).

¹⁴ Author's translation.

to defend her once she turns on her Russian comrades. She is patronised by both Rocco and her Russian comrades. Rocco counters Tanja's offer to assist by noting "still, you remain a woman. This is a man's job" (GV: 19). He calls her a "brave girl" (GV: 75) and considers her to be helpless: "if they catch her, it's done with. Now I feel responsible for her safety" (GV: 81). The major notices that she is not drinking with them, and asks her "ha, my dove, is this little medicine too strong for you?" (GV: 65). Only once does she brandish a handgun, which she promptly hands over to Rocco.

The villains in *Grensvegter* 48 are Russian terrorists. Rocco's opinion of Russians is established early on: "I don't like Russians" (GV: 7). His distrust of the defectors, "you can never trust a Russian" (GV: 26), is justified when they betray him. They are alternately described as "Russian scum" (GV: 58)¹⁵ or as "thugs... sadists, that's what they are! Heartless savages!" (GV: 63). They are negatively stereotyped as pawns of the "Russian system" (GV: 19) who seek only to sow destruction. The majority of the villains may be classified as one-dimensional, "in some sense acting like active parts of the setting" (Rabkin & Simon 2004). The arch-villain, major Malik, is described in slightly more detail. His motivations are equally base, however: he wishes to destroy Rocco and his influence on "Black Africa" (GV: 42). The negative stereotyping of Russians may be considered as reflecting the anti-communist sentiments of 1970s South Africa.¹⁶

The predominant setting for *Grensvegter* 48 is the Angolan and southern Tanzanian veldt. It is portrayed by an indiscriminate, dense bushveld populated with bushes, trees and shrubs. This setting is used to represent a general Southern African landscape, and no obvious distinction is made between Angola and southern Tanzania other than indications in the text. The landscape is reminiscent of the so-called 'Operational Area' in Angola, and as such serves to "embellish our understanding of the plot and/or the characters" (Rabkin & Simon 2004). The majority of the images were presumably shot in Kwazulu-

¹⁵ Originally "Russiese uitvaagsels" (GV: 58).

¹⁶ This stereotyping may be merely a story-telling tool. Nachbar and Lause (1992: 239-240) note that "in a Western we don't need to know the inner psychology of the bad guy. It's enough to know he is a murderous rustler, for example. What we really want to see or read about is the gunfight in the dusty streets at sundown". In either case, the anti-communist sentiments may be considered as reflecting the 1970s South African political discourse.

Natal.¹⁷ For the most part the characters creep through and engage in combat in this setting. The bushveld, as the focal point of the battle against communism, in a sense emphasises the notion that Rocco is embroiled in the battle between wilderness and civilization, much like the classic Westerns (Lacey 2000). Rocco often reflects on the terrorist threat to Africa, and he is described as being worshipped as an idol by Africans. This echoes Defence Minister Botha's suggestion that the South African intervention is in the interest of the whole of Africa and, indeed, the entire world (Notes from the house...1976).

There are two other settings in the story; an undisclosed beach location and the city of Pretoria. The Pretoria setting is established by an image of the statue of Paul Kruger in Church Square, Pretoria (*GV*: 6). Botes (1998: 27) notes that this particular image is often used to locate Rocco in Pretoria, and suggests that this emphasises "the patriarch's role as saviour in times of crisis".¹⁸

I consider the bush setting, the use of weaponry and the symbolic stereotyping of the Russian villains and Rocco de Wet to be iconographic. The most noticeable iconographic feature of *Grensvegter* is the bush setting. As noted above, for the most part the characters creep through and engage in combat in this setting. Rocco is often depicted taking cover behind trees (*GV*: 3, 34 & 87, see Figures 2, 3 and 4). The dense foliage not only establishes the setting, but also reflects on Rocco's character. He is most at home alone in the bush, and we are told of his "years in the bush" (*GV*: 29). As noted above the bush setting may also serve to emphasise the struggle between wilderness and civilization.

An important iconographic feature is the presence of weaponry, most notably machine guns. The story features two types of machine guns and one revolver.¹⁹ Rocco uses both

¹⁷ Dianne (2005) recalls that "most of the filming was done at Republican Press in Mobeni, Durban," and Makkink (2004) recalls visiting the set of the Western title *Lone Wolf* in Mariannhill, Kwazulu-Natal.

¹⁸ Author's translation.

¹⁹ Tanja appears with a revolver to assist Rocco's escape, but immediately hands it over to him (*GV*: 72).

types of machine guns during the course of the story.²⁰ When Rocco runs out of ammunition, he uses his axe or his bare hands to destroy his opponents. Botes (1998) considers the appearance of weapons in the *Grensvegter* series as instances of phallic iconography that serve to enforce sexual domination.

The stereotyping of Russians makes use of iconography. They celebrate their victory over Rocco by drinking white liquor (presumably vodka) and singing “Russian back-yard songs” (*GV*: 66). More noteworthy, however, is the depiction of their uniforms and facial hair. While most of their uniforms are non-descript, they wear either berets or floppy bush-hats to denote their Russian identity.²¹ Tanja wears a beret to signify her Russian background. With exception of the major and a single troop, who sport moustaches, the Russians are all either heavily bearded or unshaven. Kapuściński (1987: 37) notes that many white members of MPLA wore beards, and that they are thus treated “with respect, because if he’s white with a beard he must be somebody, the leader of a unit or higher”. While the Russian’s moustaches may be described as iconographic, they pale in comparison to Rocco’s.

Rocco’s moustache may be described as iconographic, and indeed forms an integral part of his character. His moustache denotes his macho and manly character, and may be understood to emphasise the patriarchal nature of his character. White Afrikaner nationalism is often associated with moustaches, and is the focus of Bernoldus Niemand’s song *Snor City*, which became a common nickname for “the biggest Afrikaner city, Pretoria” (Cloete 2001). The *Bitterkomix* series often makes use of a moustache to stereotype white Afrikaner males (Kannemeyer & Botes 1992, 1994, 2004).

²⁰ Both types of machine gun look suspicious, and I have been unable to identify them. I suspect that they are props manufactured for the series. The first loosely resembles a World War II ‘sten gun’, but appears to be welded together from steel pipes and sports a chain sling (Figure 5). The second type appears more convincing, but seems to have been modified with ambiguous ‘machine gun features’ (Figure 6). Walker (2004a) passingly refers to the “wooden machine guns” of the photocomics.

²¹ Similar bush-hats were worn by the Cuban troops in Angola (Spies 1989: 78). The Russian’s bush-hats and major Malik’s uniform more closely resemble the dress of the early 1970s Portuguese defence force (Abbott & Rodrigues 1998).

Stylistically *Grensvegter* 48 presents a predictable adventure story dominated by action scenes. The conventional nature of the *Grensvegter* series (Botes 1998) suggests that *Grensvegter* may usefully be classified as belonging to a genre. The visual style of the work is comparatively realistic due to the use of photographs. This realism is offset, however, by a narrative which requires the suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader. The lack of intentional humour emphasises the serious action bent of the story.

It is noted that the image depicting soldiers patrolling in Angola differs in quality from the rest of the book (Figure 7). I assume it to be of different origin from the images in the rest of the book. These stock-images (more appear on pages 4, 22, 23, 53, 64 and 78, see Figures 8-13) either attempt to increase the believability of the story or, more likely, are used for the sake of convenience. Problematically, the helicopters featured on pages 22 and 23 (Figures 9 and 10) appear to be American ‘Huey’ Bell UH-1 helicopters (Mason 2005), and these images probably originate from the 1965-1973 Vietnam war (Karnow 1994).²² A more relevant photograph depicts grass-thatched houses and two figures contemplating what appears to be an Alouette helicopter circling above (Figure 11).

In terms of language use, *Grensvegter* 48 generally makes use of proper Afrikaans and there are few instances of colloquial language.²³ Walker (2004a) contrasts the action photocomics with the romance titles which were aimed at a “more erudite reader”. There is an unintentional humorous quality to the forced nature of Rocco’s language, as when he calls his torturers “Russian scum” (*GV*: 58). This unintentional humorous quality is alluded to in *Bomfok* (Botes 1994). The rare instances of slang and the complete absence of swearwords do not fit the expected language use amongst SADF or Russian troops.

²² My assumption takes cognizance of the suggestion by Goebel (2004) that Hueys were sold to Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

²³ When the Joera speaks Portuguese it is suggested in a caption while his speech is presented in Afrikaans. Similarly, when the Russians speak amongst themselves, it is presented in Afrikaans. The explanation offered is that Rocco can speak ten languages (*GV*: 13).

5.3.3 Summary

If one is to consider *Grensvegter* 48 as the visible product of a process of cultural evolution, two important issues may be noted. Firstly, the form of the book is related to the appearance of photocomics in South Africa, and may be considered as an example of the vertical transmission of cultural information from Italy to South Africa. The memes for romantic and adventure genres may have been transmitted along with the photocomic memes, evidenced by their popularity both in the Italian *photonovella* and the South African photocomics. This replication of genres causes Twiggs (1996) to suggest that some photocomics “may have been modelled so closely on their imported counterparts that they cannot [add to our critical understanding of South African pop-culture]”.

Secondly, the content of *Grensvegter* 48 contains numerous references to the anti-communist sentiments and the patriarchal social structure of South Africa circa 1976. This is evidenced by the stereotyping of Russians as evil, white Afrikaner males as superior and females in general as helpless victims. Social semiotics might consider this to illustrate how discourse exerts its influence on works of genre. In evolutionary terms one may consider the anti-communist sentiments and the patriarchal social structure as sets of mutually-assisting memes forming part of the relevant discourse. The prevalent memes of the time are replicated in this work of popular fiction, which may or may not have been intentionally geared towards spreading nationalist and anti-communist propaganda.

5.4 Bomfok: liefde vir die vyand deel 4 (1994)

Bomfok: liefde vir die vyand deel 4 (Botes 1994, hereafter *BF*) is a nine page graphic narrative written and illustrated by Conrad Botes. *Bomfok* appears in *Gif: Afrikaner sekscomix* (Kannemeyer & Botes 1994). *Gif* appears as a 245×172mm, 32 page saddle stitched publication with a full-colour cover and black and white interior. The story is

related by text in captions, speech bubbles and thought bubbles superimposed over illustrations. There are on average five panels per page.

Gif is a joint publication by Bitterkomix and Hond. *Bitterkomix*, founded by Joe Dog and Conrad Botes (Kannemeyer & Botes 1992), appears as a collection of alternative graphic narratives in the tradition of European *bandes dessinée* and the American underground comics of the 1960s and 1970s. The *Bitterkomix* series often makes reference to the South African photocomics; a photocomic appears in *Bitterkomix* 3 (Botes & Dog 1993), and the characters Herta (White 1998) and Arend (White 2001) are both based on Republican Press photocomic characters. In 1998 Botes produced a photocomic titled *Koert Kotze en die vrouekolonie*, which alludes to the tone of South African action photocomics (Swanepoel 1998).²⁴ The story *Bomfok* makes direct reference to the *Grensvegter* series.

It is interesting to note that *Gif* was banned in 1994, even after the lifting of strict apartheid censorship laws, “when the censors deemed it ‘undesirable’” (Morris 1995: 9). One reader commented that “the *Gif* comics is not art, it is perversion. A symptom of our sick society” (cited in Joanne 1998: 5, author’s translation). To label *Gif* as ‘a symptom of our sick society’ is to recognise its role as a work of satire.²⁵

5.4.1 Contextualisation

Insomuch as *Bomfok* depicts the general setting of the *Grensvegter* series, it is pertinent to discuss the political changes that occurred after the end of the Border war. *Bomfok* appears six years after the withdrawal of the last SADF forces from Angola following the treaty signed in 1988 (Hodges 2001). There are differing opinions on who ‘won’ the war in Angola (Hodges 2001, Breytenbach 2003, Holt 2005). By this time the perceived menace of communism had become less threatening and the Nkomati peace act in 1985

²⁴ Due to a disagreement Botes is not credited for his work on *Koert Kotze*.

²⁵ See *Glossary of terms*.

“rendered incredible the myths of the ‘total onslaught’ and ‘the border’, manufactured for domestic militarization” (Adam & Moodley 1987: 119). Bredenkamp and Messina (2002: 39) note that “the collapse of global communism, the withdrawal of Soviet and Cuban support for the MPLA regime in Angola, and the negotiated independence of Namibia [formerly South West Africa] ... did much to change the mindset of whites”. South West Africa became the independent republic of Namibia in 1990, with former SWAPO head Sam Njoma as president (Saunders & Southey 1998). Around the same time the South African ruling National Party unbanned several liberation movements, including the African National Congress (ANC), resulting in its head, Nelson Mandela, being released from Robben Island prison. In the year of *Bomfok*’s publication the ANC won a slightly under two thirds majority in the first democratic election in South Africa, and Mandela was inaugurated as president (Morris 2004). Illustrating the drastic reversal of the political environment, the prime minister of Cuba, Fidel Castro, attends Mandela’s inauguration on invitation (Joyce 2000).

Bomfok must be understood in terms of its association with the *Bitterkomix* series. *Bitterkomix* originated as a reaction by Afrikaans, middle-class white males against the nationalistic values of 1960s to 1980s South Africa, specifically “as a result of the angst young white males were subjected to here because of conscription” (Du Plessis 1992: 14). Walker (cited in Sudheim 1999: 5) recognises this aspect of *Bitterkomix*, noting that “there’s a 40 year history of brutal suppression there that’s just exploding... [*Bitterkomix*] shatter every taboo”. Gert Meesters (personal correspondence, 11 February 1999) succinctly summarises that the portrayal of stereotypes, sex and violence in *Bitterkomix* is partly “a reaction to the former repression in South Africa, and as a means of confronting people with stereotypes. ... [*Bitterkomix*] must be seen in the right context (as confronting the conservative patriarchal society), and when people get that, they like the work very much”. Botes himself (cited in De Vries 2003) notes that *Bitterkomix* is often labelled as an immoral publication because it “addresses problems without always offering a solution. We like to re-open wounds, to stimulate debate. Definitely not to throw in a moralistic message at the end each story”.²⁶ *Bomfok* may thus be usefully

²⁶ Author’s translation.

categorised as a work of satire, and alludes to the *Grensvegter* series as a means of commenting on the fictional world presented by the alluded work.

5.4.2 Textual analysis

The narrative of *Bomfok* may be categorised as linear. It is important to note that the title refers to both “a condition associated with strange/abnormal behaviour as a result of spending prolonged periods of time in the bush under combat conditions” (Holt 2005: 191) and to how Rocco is sexually assaulted with an explosive phallus towards the end of the story. As with *Grensvegter*, the story starts with Rocco on the trail of Cuban deserters in Angola. The Cubans rob a diamond mine and kidnap Precilla, the mine owner’s daughter. Rocco is summoned by General Blokkie Visser to solve the problem and taken by military helicopter to Karrasburg, where he enters the desert on the trail of the Cuban gang. Following a trail of clues (Precilla’s underwear hanging from a branch and a bent blade of grass) into dense bush, Rocco concludes that the Cubans are on their way to Morroco. The Cubans, taking turns having sex with Precilla, realise that Rocco is on their trail and plan to ambush him. Rocco uses his axe to hack his way through the dense bush, and comes upon a door leading to a theatre. He confronts a showgirl on the stage and interrogates her, but she teases him and refuses to divulge any information. Rocco prepares to assault her by hand, rips off her top and discovers that she does not have breasts. The transvestite showgirl rips off her underpants to reveal an artillery shell penis with two grenades for testicles. She grabs hold of Rocco, pulls down his pants and rapes him. In desperation Rocco declares “I swear I’ll rip off your balls!” (BF: 19) but instead pulls out the pin of a grenade, which detonates. By this time Precilla and the leader of the Cuban group enjoy a glass of wine in Paris, with the Eiffel tower in the background. In the concluding panel Rocco is shown lying on the ground amidst the rubble of the theatre, smoke billowing from his injured buttocks and surrounded by a heart shaped motif. The caption, reading “but Rocco is not your average man” (BF: 20), suggests that Rocco has not been ultimately defeated.

This story primarily criticises the sexual politics of the alluded *Grensvegter* series. Most importantly, the patriarchal nature of Rocco's character is undermined when he is sexually assaulted by the transvestite showgirl and the depiction of the female character confronts the reader with the stereotypical female character of the *Grensvegter* series. The story also questions the negative stereotype of the evil Cuban villain by presenting them in a positive light, and in a way casts doubt on the assumed validity of the war in Angola.

The main characters of *Bomfok* may be considered as the hero Rocco de Wet, General Blokkie Visser, the female character Precilla, the Cuban villains and the transvestite showgirl. The character of Rocco de Wet is directly appropriated from the *Grensvegter* series, and is depicted as essentially stereotypical and two-dimensional as in *Grensvegter* 48. The reader is assumed to have some familiarity with his character from the alluded series. We are told that "no clue escaped the experienced tracker" (BF: 13), that "it is madness to attack him" (BF: 15) and that "Rocco is not your average man" (BF: 20). His masculinity and his mastery of the bush environment are overstated, as in his assessment that the bent blade of grass means the Cubans are headed for Morocco. This overstatement is important for the conclusion, where Rocco is violated with an exploding phallus, to function as a work of satire. In sharp contrast to his original *Grensvegter* identity is the depiction of Rocco as the victim of sexual assault and his subsequent utterance "help... somebody help me..." (BF: 19). This contrast is epitomised by Rocco uttering a quiet "ouch" (BF: 20) in the concluding panel. This is at extreme odds with his *Grensvegter* identity and serves the satirical bent of the story.

General Blokkie Visser essentially takes on the role of brigadier Flikfloo in *Grensvegter* as the head of the South African army and the authority to whom Rocco answers. We are told, however, that the kidnapped girl is a "close girlfriend" (BF: 12) of the general. This statement suggests an unsavoury relationship between the two, and along with the visual depiction of the general as an overweight, squint and generally pathetic figure, serves to undermine the patriarchal values offered in the *Grensvegter* series.

The depiction of Precilla makes reference to the portrayal of female characters in the *Grensvegter* series. Her role as a sex object is overstated, however, as when she is depicted as a pair of stockinged legs over the shoulder of the Cuban leader and having sex with the Cubans. In contrast to the *Grensvegter* convention she is depicted as sexually liberated and enjoys having sex with the Cuban rebels: “ooooohh!! That was *so* nice! Let’s do it again” (BF: 14). While her character is essentially as two-dimensional as Tanja’s in *Grensvegter* 48, as evidenced by her comment “after that I worked for two years as a typist in Bloemfontein” (BF: 20), she is portrayed more as a co-conspirator than as a victim.

While the Cuban defectors are generally portrayed as two-dimensionally as the Russian villains in *Grensvegter*, they are credited with a more positive portrayal. They are not stereotyped as communist clones intent on destroying Africa, and their main motivation is to profit from the diamond heist and have a good time. The Cuban leader is depicted as somewhat more sophisticated than major Malik in *Grensvegter*, especially in his portrayal as a wine-drinking Parisian in a pinstripe suit and tie. The reader is invited to identify more with the Cuban defectors than with Rocco. This serves to undermine the negative stereotype of the evil communist as presented in the *Grensvegter*, and in this way questions the assumption that communists are inherently evil.

The transvestite showgirl, as her indeterminate sexuality indicates, confronts several aspects of sexuality as portrayed in *Grensvegter*. This sexuality is also linked to power, as after teasing and being patronised by Rocco she sexually assaults him and symbolically destroys his masculinity. She simultaneously takes on the roles of female victim, victorious villain and hero. This confusing mixture of roles is further signified by the fact that she wears a beret with a heart (instead of a communist star). She may be considered as an amalgamation of several *Grensvegter* stereotypes, and she deals the final blow against the dominating Rocco.

The predominant setting for *Bomfok* is the Operational Area in Angola. After travelling through the Namibian desert Rocco finds himself in dense bushveld. The images

gradually become overwhelmingly dark, indicating the density of the undergrowth. The dense bush visually overwhelms Rocco, and he uses his axe to hack his way through it. This contrasts with Rocco's familiarity with the bush setting in *Grensvegter*. The setting of Rocco's downfall is established by the surrealist appearance of a theatre in the bush. This surrealism is elaborated upon in the subsequent sequence of events where the transvestite showgirl reveals her explosive genitalia. The unfamiliarity of the setting underlines the satirical nature of the story and emphasises the understanding that this story appropriates but transforms the typical *Grensvegter* story.

The third setting that appears in the story is Paris. The setting is established by the portrayal of the Eiffel tower in the background. This image may serve the same iconographic role as the image of the Kruger statue in *Grensvegter* 48. The Eiffel tower may tentatively be considered as a phallic symbol, a view supported by Botes' (1998) comment on the patriarchal nature of the depiction of the Paul Kruger statue mentioned under the discussion of *Grensvegter*.

Much of the iconography in *Bomfok*, such as the depiction of weaponry, the stereotyping of the Cuban villains and Rocco's axe and moustache, alludes to that of the *Grensvegter* series. Most notable of these is the depiction of weaponry, specifically machine guns, rockets and grenades. The depiction of weaponry alludes to the original series, but transforms its meaning by placing it in a different configuration. The leader of the Cuban defectors is portrayed standing naked amongst an array of machine guns and grenades (Figure 14). This, along with the transvestite showgirl's weapon-like genitalia, suggests a sexual connotation to the iconographic use of weapons. It may be considered as signalling the use of weaponry as phallic symbols of sexual domination (Botes 1998). In this way *Bomfok* appropriates and transforms the iconography of the *Grensvegter* series and offers an underlying meaning to its original manifestation.

The stereotyping of the Cuban villains is effected by the same iconography as used in the *Grensvegter* series. They are generally depicted with facial hair and smoking cigars, and conform to Walker's (2004a) description of the *Grensvegter* series' "naughty cigar

smoking Cuban clones”. This originally negative stereotype is contrasted with their depiction as likeable characters, as noted above.

Rocco’s axe makes an appearance, along with its masculine connotation as a devastating weapon. The potency of the axe as a symbol of power is undermined, however, as Rocco merely uses it to hack his way through the undergrowth. This subtly pokes fun at the role of Rocco’s axe as an instrument of murder in the *Grensvegter* series. Once again Rocco’s moustache appears as an important signifier to his character. As before, it is used to stereotype him and may be taken to signify the patriarchal nature of his character. While in this sense it is used in essentially the manner as in *Grensvegter*, in the context of this story it may be understood to emphasise his ultimate emasculation.

As alluding to the *Grensvegter* series, much of the general style of *Bomfok* takes the form of a standard adventure story. While this is satirised during the story, it is only properly broken away from during the surreal confrontation in the theatre. By placing the generic adventure story in a satirical context it confronts the reader with the conventions of the *Grensvegter* series. The general visual style is more iconic than *Grensvegter* 48, in being expressively illustrated by brush and ink. This contrast compliments the satirical nature of the story.

The use of language in *Bomfok* is of importance, as Rheeder (1995: 15) notes “the authentic South African dialogue used in *Bitterkomix* portrays the language of the man in the street... *Bitterkomix* uses the different variations of Afrikaans to effect the satire”.²⁷ In this way *Bomfok* pokes fun at the forced language used in the *Grensvegter* series, as when Rocco curses the dense bush with “cursed undergrowth!” (BF: 15) and confronts the showgirls with “listen madam, I want answers! Not a ooh-ah!” (BF: 17).²⁸ At other times Rocco’s language is incongruous with the *Grensvegter* series, such as when he assures the general “don’t worry. I’ll shoot off his balls!” (BF: 13) and when he threatens the showgirl “I swear I’ll rip off your balls! ... O fuck!” (BF: 19). The combination of

²⁷ Author’s translation.

²⁸ Originally “vervloekte ruigtes!” (BF: 15) and “luister dame, ek soek antwoorde! Nie ’n ge-oe-aa nie!” (BF: 17).

Grensvegter's stiff, proper Afrikaans with more contemporary dialect and slang is also used to present the Cuban defectors, who note "Rocco will *destroy* us!" (BF: 15)²⁹, while making use of slang terms such as "forgerrit baby" (BF: 14). The use of language in *Bomfok* may be understood to aid the satirisation of the *Grensvegter* series.

5.4.3 Summary

As the visible product of a process of cultural evolution, the formal aspects of *Bomfok* may be understood as arising from the influence of European *bandes dessinée* and the American underground comics on the *Bitterkomix* series (Kannemeyer & Botes 1994). Its general style and content alludes to the *Grensvegter* series, and appropriates the same stereotypes and iconographic devices of that series. As a work of satire, however, the story recontextualises the alluded conventions to express commentary on the world of *Grensvegter*. This satire reaches its apex when Rocco is sexually assaulted with phallic weaponry by a transvestite character. This is related to Botes' (1998) focus on weaponry as phallic symbols of male domination. In this way *Bomfok* pokes fun at the underlying patriarchy depicted in the alluded series, and, by portraying the Cuban villains as likeable characters, questions the portrayal of communists as inherently evil in the *Grensvegter* series. Both of these aspects must be seen in the light of the fall of the National Party and the crumbling of white Afrikaner nationalism in 1994. As such *Bomfok* reflects the relevant discourse and may influence that discourse either by reinforcing or disrupting it. In evolutionary terms the patriarchal and anti-communist sentiments manifested in the *Grensvegter* series, which may be regarded as sets of mutually-assisting memes, are replicated in *Bomfok*. They are adapted, reconfigured and combined with satire however, which reflects the evolution of discourse. The focus of a meme's eye view is the selfish replication of memes, in whichever context.

²⁹ Originally "Rocco sal ons *vermorsel*!" (BF: 15).

5.5 So stil soos 'n landmyn (2004)

So stil soos 'n landmyn (Du Plessis & Du Plessis 2004, hereafter *Landmyn*) is a four page graphic narrative written by Tienie du Plessis and illustrated by Daniël du Plessis. It appears in *Bitterkomix* 13 (Kannemeyer & Botes 2004), a 48 page saddle-stitched publication with a full-colour cover and black and white interior. The story is related by text in speech bubbles superimposed over illustrations. There on average ten panels per page.

The editors describe *Bitterkomix* 13 as an “all white male issue” (Kannemeyer & Botes 2004: 2), and it features exclusively white male contributors. This theme must be considered against the background of the *Bitterkomix* series’ satirical take on stereotypes, sex and violence. That *So stil soos 'n landmyn* appears in *Bitterkomix* may suggest its status as an alternative graphic narrative, in a way more closely aligned with *Bomfok* than with *Grensvegter*. But while it offers a critical appraisal of the Border war and its nationalist context, the lack of humour in its presentation suggests that it may not be considered as a work of satire. In this respect it is more closely related to the critical nature of satire.

5.5.1 Contextualisation

While *So stil soos 'n landmyn* deals with Border war, it appears in the same year that the ANC celebrates ten years of democratic rule, and sixteen years after the official end of the South African military intervention in Angola (Saunders & Southey 1998). In 1999 the ANC won 66% of the vote, and as a party in government “remained in character a liberation movement whose constituency spanned the intellectual left, the rising black middle class, the rural poor, social democrats, and workers” (Morris 2004: 279-280). This is evidenced by the close alliance between the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP), and the communist political background of several governmental ministers. Also during the 1999 election the Democratic Party replaced the National Party (by this time known as the New National Party) as the official opposition in parliament,

and by 2000 the two parties merged (Bredekamp & Messina 2002). The government behind the military involvement in Angola had become a spent political force.

As the title indicates *So stil soos 'n landmyn* deals specifically with the use of landmines during the Angolan civil war. It forms part of a contemporary re-evaluation of the South African involvement in Angola, which may be viewed in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's proposal to help "inculcate a commitment to accountability and transparency in South Africa's public life, at the same time helping to heal wounds inflicted by the apartheid era" (Bredekamp & Messina 2002: 40). This re-evaluation sometimes contrasts with the governmental stance during the war, a stance often reflected in most books on the subject (Breytenbach 2002, Nortje 2003). It is reflected by Heitman (1980: 129), who offers that the landmine "represents the simplest and most economical method of spreading fear and uncertainty among the local population and of casting doubt on the security forces' ability to provide useful protection". This description primarily serves to vilify the enemy, while the devastating effect of American mines planted by UNITA goes unnoticed. Monin and Gallimore (2002: 113-114) note that while all parties involved in the Angolan war planted landmines, their "use increased markedly in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the involvement of Rhodesia and South Africa. ... UNITA and South African forces also used a lot of improved mines and booby traps, including anti-lift devices, which ensured the mines would go off if anyone tried to clear them". This damning assessment of the use of landmines by South African and UNITA forces echoes the condemnation generally levelled at MPLA and SWAPO, and the use of anti-lift devices contrasts with the current drive to de-mine Southern Africa (Elliot 2000). In 1997 the South African government banned "the manufacture, use and transportation of landmines. It will also not allow the use of its territory as a transit point" (Kalley et al. 1999: 760). South African Deputy Minister of Defence Madlala-Routledge (2000: vii) argues that "the eradication of these mines must be seen as a priority if the region is to develop and prosper".

So stil soos 'n landmyn also makes subtle reference to the conscription of civilians for military duty. The Defence Act of 1967 required white male South Africans to perform

national service, which entailed an initial period of training followed by a period of active service and several years in reserve status (Conscription... [sa]). Conscientious objectors who refused to comply faced incarceration of up to six years, and in reaction groups such as the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) were formed. The ECC is described as “one of the biggest and most significant anti-apartheid groups working amongst white South Africans... effectively striking at the very heart of the white power system” (Catholic Institute... 1989: 10). Holt (2005: 7) suggests that conscripted troops were “a bunch of ordinary guys who were thrust into a life-and-death situation without knowing what they were getting into, or being afforded the freedom of choice prior to becoming involved”.

5.5.2 Textual analysis

The plot of *So stil soos 'n landmyn* is non-linear. The story is framed by a discussion on the use of landmines between two male figures seated around a table.³⁰ The linear storyline, which is suggested by the non-linear plot, may be described as follows. A group of SADF troops patrol a savannah landscape, presumably the Operation Area. They come across a deserted town that shows signs of a battle, and rest in the shadow of a partially destroyed church. Two unnamed soldiers, one with blond hair and the other with dark hair, break off from the group to investigate the church. The troop with dark hair is hesitant, protesting “no dude. Leave it alone” (*Landmyn*: 31).³¹ They enter the church, which is empty except for broken pews and icons against the rear wall, and exit to a graveyard on the other side of the church. The blond haired troop investigates flowers lying on a grave, and a bird is shown flying over the church. The dark haired troop comments “today the war isn’t cool” (*Landmyn*: 33) as the blond haired troop walks away and steps on a landmine. His foot is blown off. While he is treated for his wounds, a radio operator summons for help and notes that the churchyard is mined. A Puma helicopter arrives and the troops carry the wounded soldier to the helicopter. The

³⁰ The almost academic discussion that frames the story raises the believability of the story, which may be seen as higher than that of *Grensvegter*. This is supported by the citation of a publication on the history of landmines (Monin & Gallimore 2002) on the last page and the comparatively accurate depiction of uniforms, weaponry and setting.

³¹ Originally “nooit ou. Los dit uit” (*Landmyn*: 31).

conclusion again depicts the two men seated at the table. The older man describes the planting of landmines in Angola, and notes that UNITA deployed American anti-personnel mines in public spaces in Angola, even in church yards. The plot is rendered non-linear by the depiction of the helicopter rushing to assist the injured troop from the onset of the story.

This story questions the validity of the South African military involvement in Angola, something which is taken as given in *Grensvegter*, in two important ways. Firstly, while in *Grensvegter* the Russian enemy is described as an evil communist who hates Africa, here the enemy is our erstwhile ally UNITA. The story primarily criticises the use of landmines by UNITA during the Border war, and by implication questions the general depiction of the MPLA and its allies as the vicious enemy, with the SADF and its allies as the saviours of Africa. The second way in which this story questions the validity of the war is by portraying one troop as hesitant, reluctant and fearful of his situation. This refers to the objections raised against conscription by groups such as the ECC.

The main characters may be considered as the two men seated at the table and the blond and dark haired troops. The rest of the characters are mostly assigned to the background. There are no female characters in *So stil soos 'n landmyn*, and as such it may not directly address the sexual politics deemed pertinent to the discussion of the previous two works.³²

The introductory and concluding scenes depict an older, bearded man addressing a younger, unshaven man. They are seated at a table, drinking beer. Readers may or may not assume them to be the co-authors of the work. The age difference between them and the fact that they are drinking suggests that the older man is relating his war experiences in Angola to the younger man. It is my experience that the retelling of war stories often occurs in bars frequented by white Afrikaans males of the generation involved in the war. Holt (2005: 4) notes that “when returning servicemen spoke to friends and family about

³² The exclusion of female characters may be related to largely male involvement in the war. It also reflects on the ‘all white male’ theme of *Bitterkomix* 13 (Kannemeyer & Botes 2004).

the brutality of this war, very few people could comprehend what they had endured, or grasp the enormity of the war and the impact it had – and would continue to have – on their lives”. It is suggested that the retelling of war stories may be a way to deal with what had happened in Angola.

The two unnamed troops are distinguishable by the colour of their hair and their facial hair. One has dark hair and wears a moustache, while the other has blond hair and is unshaven. These characters may be categorised as one-dimensional, in a sense merely serving to progress the story. Compared to the characters in *Grensvegter*, however, they are given slightly more complex motivations. The dark haired troop states his fear, warning his friend “no dude. Leave it alone” (*Landmyn*: 31). He also comments “this is a shit place” (*Landmyn*: 31) and “today the war is not cool” (*Landmyn*: 33), creating the impression that he does not want to be at war in Angola. This may be considered as portraying the reluctance of some conscripted troops to become involved in the war, and contrasts strongly with Rocco de Wet’s attitude to the war. There are no heroes in the story.

There are two settings in the story; the room in which the two figures drink and talk and the Operational Area in Angola. The first setting is at a remove from the rest of the story, which emphasises the remove between the academic discussion of landmines and their effect in the Operational Area. The Operational Area is set in an undisclosed location in Angola. That it is set in Angola is indicated in the text towards the end of the story. Visual clues as to the location of the setting include the combination of the uniforms of the troops, the Puma helicopter, the savannah landscape and the Portuguese architecture of the church building. While this setting resembles the stock photographs in *Grensvegter* in terms of historical accuracy, there are no scenes in a bushveld setting.

The predominant instances of iconography may be considered to be uniforms of the troops, the Puma helicopter and the Portuguese architecture of the church building. The troops are depicted patrolling in uniform and carrying machine guns. Their uniforms resemble early 1980s SADF webbing (Sonderling 1980) and their machine guns resemble

R4 or R5 assault rifles.³³ The webbing and rifles were standard issue for conscripted troops. These uniforms and rifles may be considered as iconographic, as they serve to reinforce the setting, date and general mood of the story. The focus on the blond haired troop's boot as he steps onto the landmine strengthens the iconographic depiction of the uniforms.

The Puma helicopter may be considered as iconographic. Pumas were generally used to transport troops around the Operational Area, and were often portrayed in local media reports on the war (Venter 1994, see Figures 15 and 16). The effectiveness of South African mechanised divisions during the war is often highlighted in publications on the subject, and South Africa has subsequently become a major exporter of military hardware (Nortje 2003). Although Pumas continue to be used by the SADF, I suggest that its depiction in *So stil soos 'n landmyn* serves both to establish the period and, along with the uniforms of the troops, to set the general tone of the story by referring to South African military hardware.

The church is identified as Portuguese by its architecture, the icons inside the church hall and the upright gravestones in the graveyard. These clues may be considered as iconographically pointing to the Portuguese colonial influence on Angola. Furthermore, the incongruity between the depiction of the graveyard setting as both serene and the site of violence underlines the dubious nature of landmines.

Although the landmine only appears once, its omnipresence suggests it may be considered as an instance of iconography. From the beginning of the story it is implied that someone is going to run afoul a landmine, and when this does happen it comes as no surprise. In this sense the story assigns an importance to the landmine, and its appearance may be considered as an important iconographic aspect of the story.

³³ The design of the R4 and R5 is based on the Israeli Galil assault rifle (R4 assault rifle... [sa]). The folding stock on the rifles shown were later added to the R4 design, but was an adaptation specifically designed for paratroops and mostly found on R5s (Walker 2004b).

It is difficult to define this story as a conventional adventure story. There are several aspects of a typical war story to the work, such as the troops patrolling the Operational Area, but the absence of heroes or of action scenes renders such a definition improbable. The work's general visual style is relatively unstylised and realistic, in a way more closely related to *Grensvegter* 48 than to *Bomfok*. The illustrations, executed with a technical pen, pay close attention to detail and are reminiscent of the European *bandes dessinée* and the *Bitterkomix* series. The use of dot-screens to create an impression of depth, on the other hand, is more reminiscent of techniques often employed by Japanese 'manga' artists (Otomo 2000).

The use of language contrasts strongly with *Grensvegter* 48, and the presence of swearwords and the use of slang relates it more closely to *Bomfok*. The lack of humour, however, implies a different intent. The language is presented as authentic, and compliments the serious nature of the theme. Troops in the SADF have a rich and varied array of slang terms for various vehicles, occupations and situations, and Holt (2005: 113) comments on the "usual profanities common to permanent force personnel". By presenting more authentic language than *Grensvegter* 48 does, it invites the reader to identify and empathise with the troops.

5.5.3 Summary

So stil soos 'n landmyn displays formal influences originating from the European *bandes dessinée*, the *Bitterkomix* series and, as evidenced by the use of dot-screens, Japanese manga. In this sense it may be considered as the evolutionary result of the recombination of several graphic narrative memes. In terms of content, it largely questions the tactics of the South African ally UNITA during the Border war. As such it may be considered as reflecting a contemporary critical assessment of the Border war. The criticism raised against UNITA's dubious tactic of planting landmines in public spaces echoes earlier condemnations aimed at the MPLA and its allies. These concerns are reconfigured against a background critical of the South African involvement in Angola and the tactics

of its allies. By depicting the devastating effect of landmines it confronts the suffering endured by troops during the Border war in a way that *Grensvegter* 48 does not, and in this way presents an evaluation of the war that conflict with Rocco's patriotic stance. To restate this in evolutionary terms, *So stil soos 'n landmyn* may be described as replicating aspects of the evolving discourse on the Border war, and does so by combining earlier appraisals of the war with a contemporary critical re-appraisal.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have applied a method of analysis, based on evolutionary epistemology's naturalistic perspective on culture and the memetic theory of cultural evolution, in combination with the analysis of genre and discourse in social semiotics and media studies, to the analysis of three South African graphic narratives. The works I have analysed are *Rocco de Wet, Grensvegter 48: net een keer terug* (Republican Press 1976), *Bomfok: liefde vir die vyand deel 4* (Botes 1994) and *So stil soos 'n landmyn* (Du Plessis & Du Plessis 2004). These graphic narratives are all in Afrikaans and depict, in some way or another, the South African military involvement in the Angolan civil war from 1975 to 1988. While these works may not belong to a single genre category, I suggest that the re-occurrence of conventional elements and the replication of aspects of discourse may be discussed in the light of the memetic theory of cultural evolution.

Two aspects are of importance to the discussion of *Grensvegter* 48. Firstly, as the visible product of a process of cultural evolution, the form of the book may be seen as originating from the horizontal transmission of cultural information, across genetic lineages, from Italy to South Africa. While it seems that the memes for romantic and adventure genres may have latched onto the photocomic meme, as evidenced by their popularity both in the Italian *photonovella* and the South African photocomics, it allows for a degree of localised content. The decline of the photocomic's popularity may be linked to the introduction of television in South Africa, which may be seen as having altered the selective environment.

Secondly, contextualised within the South African military intervention in Angola in 1976, a textual analysis of *Grensvegter* 48 reveals underlying references to both the anti-communist sentiments and the patriarchal social structure of South Africa circa 1976. Sometimes these references are very direct, as when the hero Rocco de Wet comments “I don’t like Russians” (*GV*: 7). It is further evidenced by the negative stereotyping of Russians, the stereotyping of white Afrikaner males as superior and females in general as helpless victims. These stereotypes and sentiments are strengthened by the use of specific iconography, such as weaponry, facial hair and the bush setting, in a particular context and configuration. While social semiotics may focus on how discourse exerts its influence on genre, in evolutionary terms one may consider the anti-communist propaganda and the presented patriarchy as sets of mutually-assisting memes manifested in 1970s South African discourse. Through an evolutionary process of blind variation and selective retention these memes became prevalent in the discourse, and, intentionally or not, replicated in a work of popular fiction.

The formal aspects of *Bomfok* may be understood as arising predominantly from the influence of European *bandes dessinée* and the American underground comics. This may be better understood in terms of Sperber’s (1996) ‘influence’ than as the direct replication of form as portrayed by *Grensvegter* 48. In either case it may be viewed as illustrating the horizontal and oblique transmission of cultural information across genetic lineages. By also alluding to the *Grensvegter* series it appropriates aspects of that series’ formal characteristics, including its stereotypes and iconographic devices.

In terms of content, *Bomfok* must be viewed as a work of satire, recontextualising and reconfiguring the alluded conventions to express commentary on the world of *Grensvegter*. The criticism it expresses may be considered in the context of the general fall from power of the National Party during the late 1980s and the consequential crumbling of Afrikaner nationalism. By having the hero Rocco de Wet sexually assaulted with phallic weaponry by a transvestite character it pokes fun at the underlying patriarchy depicted in *Grensvegter*. *Bomfok* also confronts the stereotyped assumption presented in *Grensvegter* that all communists are inherently evil. By doing so it reflects a re-

assessment of the anti-communist sentiments prevalent during the Border war. In evolutionary terms it may be suggested that aspects of the patriarchal and anti-communist sets of mutually-assisting memes are replicated in *Bomfok*. They are, however, adapted, reconfigured and combined with satire. This reconfiguration may reflect the evolution of aspects of South African discourse. The focus of a meme's eye view is the selfish replication of memes, in whichever context, and the cultural fitness of this new configuration may or may not be higher than the previous configuration.

So stil soos 'n landmyn displays formal influences from the European *bandes dessinée*, the *Bitterkomix* series and Japanese manga. Its formal characteristics may then be viewed, in the context of culture evolving, as a re-combination of these horizontally transmitted influences. This re-combination is evidenced by the drawing technique, the use of a dot-screen texture and the graphic narrative form of the work.

So stil soos 'n landmyn may be broadly contextualised in the ten years of democratic rule by the ANC and a contemporary critical assessment of the Border war. The election to government of a formerly banned liberation movement signals this re-assessment of South Africa's war against communism in Angola. *So stil soos 'n landmyn* largely questions the tactic of South Africa's ally UNITA to plant landmines in public spaces during the Border war. The criticisms levelled at UNITA and, by implication, South Africa and America, echoes earlier condemnations aimed at the MPLA and its allies. In addition to this, the work echoes objections against the conscription of civilians for national service by groups such as the ECC and touches on the damaging psychological effect the war had on many conscripted troops. This assessment of the Border war generally contradicts the stance reflected in *Grensvegter* 48. In evolutionary terms, *So stil soos 'n landmyn* may be described as replicating aspects of the Border war discourse, in combination with a critical assessment thereof.

If one is to accept the theory that the transformation of culture is an evolutionary process, this method of analysis may identify the evolutionary characteristics displayed by cultural artefacts. While the usefulness of this method of analysis is restricted by the complexity

of culture and the influence of political, economic, psychological and other factors on cultural transformation, I suggest that this analysis identifies three important evolutionary characteristics of these works. Firstly, I suggest that the formal characteristics of these works derive from horizontally transmitted cultural information. This is evidenced by the transmission of the photocomic genre from Italy to South Africa and the apparent influences of European *bandes dessinée*, American underground comics and Japanese manga on the illustrated works. It is also pertinent to note that the works make use of graphic narrative conventions, such as panels, speech bubbles, thought bubbles and captions. This information is replicated and presented in, to a greater or lesser extent, new configurations and offered back into the cultural sphere. These issues relate to the replicative success of memes, which may be considered in terms of the photocomic genre itself, the visual stylistic influences of European, American and Japanese graphic narratives and the constituent elements of graphic narratives.

Secondly, the re-occurrence of conventionalised elements identified in the textual analysis may be seen to illustrate the selective retention of units of cultural inheritance. The similarity between the narrative and characters displayed by *Grensvegter* and *Bomfok*, despite the role of satire in the latter work, exemplifies this point. It is further illustrated by the conventionalised portrayal of the setting, which makes use of similar symbols such as the bushveld vegetation. Other important elements that re-occur are the depiction of facial hair and weaponry. While these conventionalised elements are portrayed in contrasting ways, an evolutionary analysis may primarily focus on these elements, regardless of their context and use.

Finally, inasmuch as the content of the works reveal their discourses of origin, they may be seen as replicating the memes present in the social sphere. These memes may be more or less accurately contextualised in the fall of Afrikaner nationalism during the period which spans the late 1970s to the early 21st century. This fall is illustrated by the satirical criticism that *Bomfok* aims at the patriarchal and anti-communist sentiments originally expressed in *Grensvegter* 48. *So stil soos 'n landmyn* questions the justification of the Border war and highlights the horrors experienced by the people involved. These issues

(such as communism, patriarchy and the justification for the war) may be considered as aspects of a mutually-assisting whole. In the present argument, these aspects are viewed as memes. While this seems to support Dennett's (1995) assumption that a meme may be a semantic classification, the difficulty with exactly determining what constitutes a meme in this instance causes this analysis to appear overly simplified.

The vague distinction made between a meme and an idea (Mayr 1997) therefore causes this method to resemble similar methods of analysis in social semiotics and media studies. This may be related to Bettinger's (2003: 20) suggestion that "cultural traits may be transmitted singly or in bundles that may or may not be functionally related, and at levels ranging all the way from the individual up to the state". The ambiguous delineation of what constitutes a meme, in combination with the complexity of culture, provides the greatest obstacle to the effectivity of this method of analysis. The main contribution of this method of analysis may thus be the shift in focus it proposes. The hypothetical particle nature of memetic evolution suggests that the replication of conventionalised elements and the depiction of the concepts of communism, patriarchy and the justification for the war in these works point to aspects of co-adapted stable sets of mutually-assisting memes.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Summary of chapters

Chapter one serves as an introduction to this study. In chapter two I established the broad evolutionary framework of this study, which is situated in evolutionary epistemology. Evolutionary epistemology investigates the theoretical implications of Darwin's (1902) theory of evolution by natural selection on the nature of knowledge. This approach to culture addresses the genetic basis of the evolution of cognitive systems and the human capacity for culture and clarifies the distinction between genes and culture (Bradie & Harms 2004). The development of the hominid brain is evidenced by paleontological studies (Johanson & Edgar 2001), and the origin of culture is indicated by the symbolic use of artefacts (Klein & Edgar 2002). Evolutionary epistemology then leads to theories that consider the transformation of culture to be an evolutionary process akin to biological evolution (Durham 1990). This evolutionary process of blind variation and selective retention is described by a universal selection theory, which is derived from our understanding of biological evolution (Cziko 1995).

In chapter three I reviewed the theory of cultural evolution which defines a hypothetical unit of cultural transmission, analogous to a gene, as a meme (after Dawkins 1989). This theory describes culture as a second system of heredity, to a large extent evolving autonomously from our biological evolution (Blackmore 1999). While this approach has its fair share of critics (Aunger 2001), it hypothetically describes the transmission, selection and variation of these units of cultural transmission. The process of variation may be compared to the creative process. It is in this sense that I described cultural artefacts, such as graphic narratives, as the visible products of the process of cultural evolution.

In chapter four I attempted to link this evolutionary perspective on culture with the study of discourse and genre in social semiotics and media studies (Van Leeuwen 2005). If one were to accept the memetic theory of cultural evolution, discourse may be considered as a

“co-adapted stable set of mutually-assisting memes” (Dawkins 1989: 197). The influence that discourse exerts on genre may thus be related to the replication of memes.

Furthermore, the conventionalised nature of genre points to the selective retention of variant memes. From this hypothesis I constructed a method of analysis derived from the study of genre (Lacey 2000). This method involves contextualising the works, discussing their form and investigating their textual properties, considered here to be narrative, characterisation, setting, iconography and style.

In chapter five I applied this method to the analysis of three South African graphic narratives, namely *Rocco de Wet, Grensvegter warrior 48: net een keer terug* (Republican Press 1976), *Bomfok: liefde vir die vyand deel 4* (Botes 1994) and *So stil soos 'n landmyn* (Du Plessis & Du Plessis 2004). These works are all Afrikaans graphic narratives that depict, to varying degrees, the so-called Border war of 1975-1988. By considering these works as the visible products of cultural evolution, I traced possible origins of their forms and discussed their content as subject to discourse. The photocomic form may be traced back to its Italian origin, while the works that appear in *Bitterkomix* owe much, formally and stylistically, to the European *bandes dessinée* and the American underground comics of the 1960s and 1970s. *So stil soos 'n landmyn* also displays formal influences from the Japanese manga, evidenced by the use of dot-screen textures.

The content of the works reveals the changing assessment of the Border war in South African discourse. *Grensvegter*, contextualised in the period of South Africa's first official armed intervention in the civil war in Angola, mirrors the anti-communist justifications for the war offered by the nationalist government and the patriarchal nature of Afrikaner identity circa 1976. *Bomfok*, contextualised in the period of the ruling National Party's fall from power and the democratic elections of 1994, questions the anti-communist and patriarchal sentiments offered in *Grensvegter*. *So stil soos 'n landmyn* confronts the validity of the Border war and investigates its effect on conscripted troops, which may be considered as resulting from a critical re-assessment of the South African involvement in the Border war. The sentiments expressed in these works may be considered to reflect the evolution of the greater South African discourse.

I concluded the analysis by assessing the implications of a theory of cultural evolution on these assumptions. The re-occurrence of conventionalised elements, such as the conventionalised nature of graphic narratives and the depiction of the bush setting, facial hair and weaponry, may point to the replication of units of cultural transmission. The anti-communist and patriarchal sentiments addressed in *Grensvegter* and *Bomfok*, and the justification for the war confronted in *So stil soos 'n landmyn* may be considered to constitute aspects of co-adapted, stable sets of mutually-assisting memes. The difficulty with determining the exact boundaries of a meme leads this assumption to appear overly simplified. This study then rather contributes to shift the focus of cultural analysis towards a more descriptive and evolutionary analysis. Future analyses need to keep track of development of memetic theory and attempt to refine their approaches accordingly.

6.2 Contribution of study

The main contribution of this study may be the shift in emphasis away from a purely qualitative analysis of cultural artefacts, towards a more descriptive analysis based on evolutionary theory. A theory of cultural evolution could provide a framework for practical investigations into the evolutionary characteristics of cultural artefacts. This study suggests that the conventionalised nature of genre may point to an evolutionary origin, and combines genre theory with cultural evolutionary theory. Pending the elaboration of memetic theory, this approach could provide useful tools for future investigations into cultural phenomena in general.

This study also identifies the changing assessment of the Border war in South African discourse, as reflected in graphic narratives. *Grensvegter* 48 can be said to mirror the “nationalist day-dreams” (Twiggs 1996) and anti-communist sentiments of its contemporary political environment. *Bomfok* reflects the crumbling of Afrikaner nationalism following the unbanning of black liberation movements in 1991 and the democratic election of 1994 by satirising the nationalist nature of the *Grensvegter* series. *So stil soos 'n landmyn* brings the validity of the Border war and our faith in UNITA into

question, a perspective seldom adopted during the course of the war. This suggests that an analysis of the representation of the Border war in works of fiction may be relevant to studies of the Border war itself.

6.3 Limitations of study

The most important limitation to this study lies in the contested status of memetics as a science, even among its proponents (Aunger 2001). Critics like Gould (1996: 219-220), while accepting the theory of evolution by natural selection, dismiss the notion that culture follows a similar path and “wish that the term ‘cultural evolution’ would drop from use”. These debates often resemble a personal argument rather than an earnest academic evaluation.¹ It may or may not be that the theory of memes ever expands beyond the realms of academia, and it is not advisable to argue blindly for or against a theory of memes. This study humbly attempts to investigate the practical application of what could become an important asset to our understanding of human culture.

The second important limitation to this study is the many psychological, physiological, economic and other factors that may influence the evolution of culture. The reductionistic nature of memetic theory threatens to lose scope of the many external factors involved. The complexity of interrelated factors renders the attempt to describe a single unified theory of culture an almost impossible task. While I have attempted to isolate many potentially memetic aspects in the works, I have ignored factors that many may view as indispensable to an analysis of cultural artefacts. This problem stems from the contested status of memetics as a science, and is compounded by the comparatively limited knowledge of human neurology. The necessary simplification of the problem leads to the most apparent shortcoming of this study: that it appears as a mere rephrasing of more conventional methods of analysis. The motivation has been, as Laland and Brown (2002:

¹ The controversy causes me to remember Huxley’s often-quoted response to a question from bishop Wilberforce: “If then, said I, the question is put to me would I rather have a miserable ape for a grandfather or a man highly possessed of great means and influence and yet who employs these faculties and that influence for the mere purpose of introducing ridicule into a grave scientific discussion I unhesitatingly affirm my preference for the ape” (Zimmer 2001: 53).

43) state, that “patient chipping away at perplexing problems yields dividends in the long run”. The validity of invoking memetic theory in the analysis of cultural artefacts remains to be decided, and future studies need to take note of developments in the theory of memetics. Also, due to its recent publication, I only came across *The selfish meme* (Distin 2005), a review of contemporary memetic theory, during the final proofreading stage of this thesis. While this study may be limited by its exclusion, its appearance suggests that the debate around memes is ongoing.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

Further investigations into the role of cultural evolution in the production and assessment of cultural artefacts may have to wait, pending advances in the theory of memetics. As Ede (2005: 64) notes, “so far, the construct has failed to catch on in the art world”. If the theory of memetics becomes established in the art world, it would require a re-evaluation of the creative process and the analysis of cultural artefacts. Future evolutionary investigations need to keep tabs on the development of evolutionary theories of culture.

A potentially fruitful area of investigation lies in the South African photocomics. I have encountered relatively few studies conducted on the South African photocomics, and Martin (in Botha 2005) only recently argued that the South African photocomics must be considered as *Africana*. Ongoing, thorough investigations of the South African photocomics could raise the esteem granted to these publications by highlighting their historical importance. As Twiggs (1996) notes, “analysis of the photocomic may add to our critical understanding of a particular, localised and South African expression of pop-culture”. Such an investigation may also ease an evolutionary study and make it feasible to identify memes and trace their history.

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Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

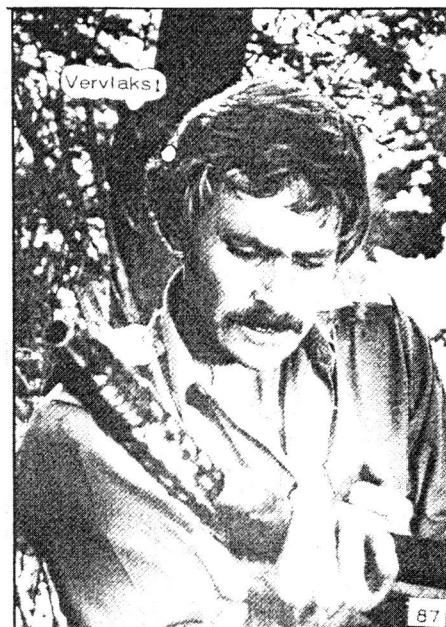


Figure 6.



Figure 7.



Figure 8.



Figure 9.

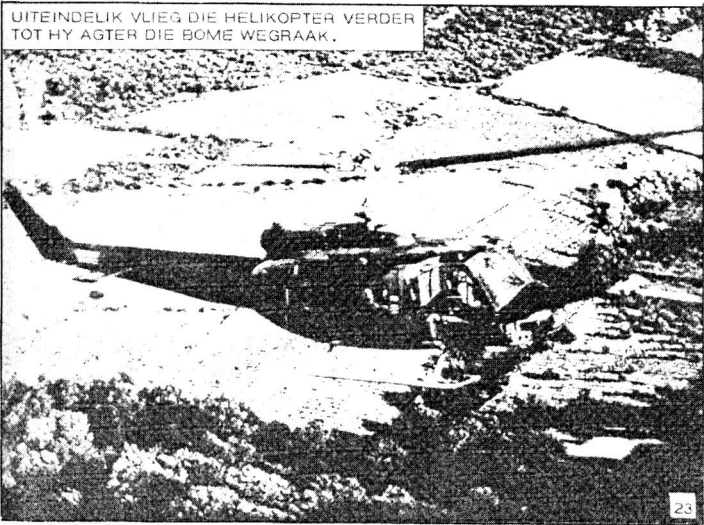


Figure 10.



Figure 11.



Figure 12.



Figure 13.



Figure 14.



Figure 15.

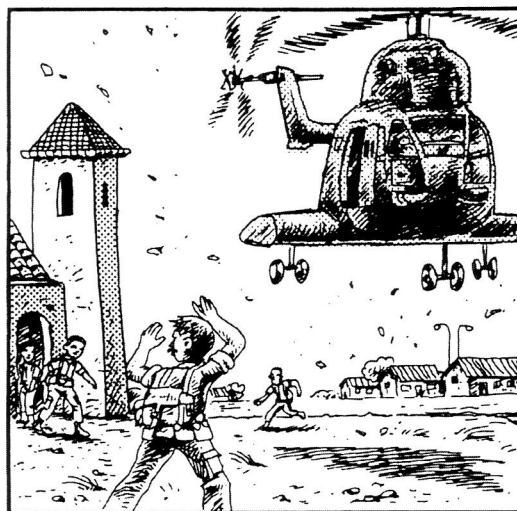


Figure 16.



Appendix A: *Rocco de Wet, Grensvegter 48: net een keer terug* (Republican Press 1976).

Die twee Russe
wou hul eie
mense verraai.
Alles was
oortuigend.
Maar kon
Rocco de Wet
hulle vertrou...?



NET EEN KEER TERUG



ROCCO DE WET, DIE GRENSVEGTER, IS AAN DIE TERUGVAL IN ANGOLA. SY
TAAK IS AFGEHANDEL, MAAR 'N VYANDELIKE SPLINTERBENDE HET SY
SPOOR GEKRY.



HY WAG HULLE EGTER IN... DAAR WAAR HY MEER BESKUTTING AS HULLE HET.

julle soek hierna...
nou gaan julle dit kry:

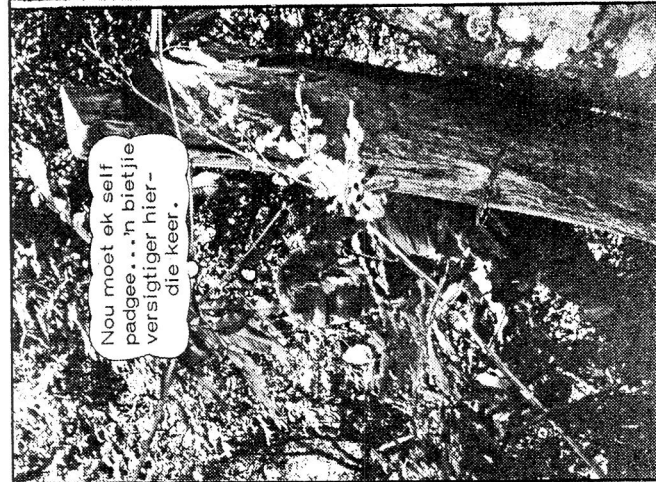




HY SKIET OP KORT AFSTAND. EN ROCCO DE WET IS 'N DODELIKE SKUT IN ALLE OMSTANDIGHEDE.

DIE INDERDAAD WAT GEBEUR. DIE AGTERVOLGERS HET GENOEG GEHAD.

Nog een, en nog...
A, die res se moed
begewe hulle. Hulle
draai om...vlug!



Nou moet ek self
padgee... 'n bietjie
versigtiger hier-
die keer.



Ek het dalk te gerus
geword... nie my spoor
behoorlik uitgewis nie.



In elk geval, nog net 'n paar uur,
dan is ek in Suidwes. Daarna
Windhoek en Pretoria toe vir 'n
dag of drie en dan... veertien
dae se vakansie in my strandhuis!

NA SY VERSLAG AAN BRIGADIER JACOBS IN PRETORIA, "VERDWYN" DIE GRENSEVGTER 'N RUK UIT DIE SAMELEWING. HY WIL NIE MENSE SIEN OF MET HULLE PRAAT NIE. HY WIL NET SWEM, HENGEL, KREWE TUSSEN DIE ROTSE SOEK, VAN ALLES WEGKOM...RUS!

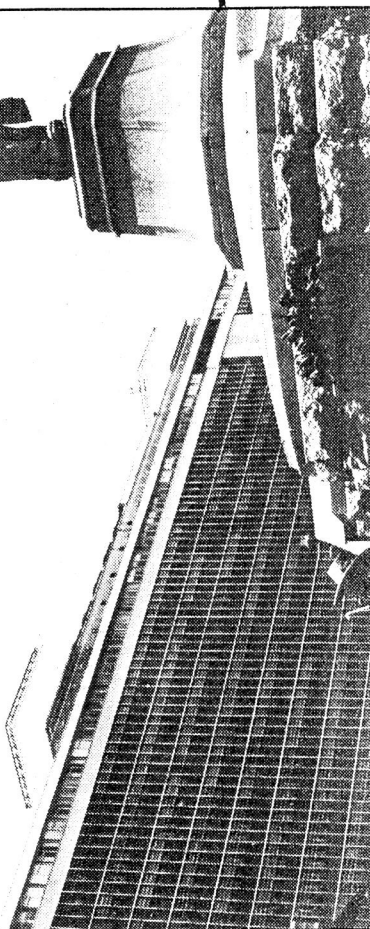


EN TOE GEBEUR DIT, SKAARS DRIE DAE LATER...

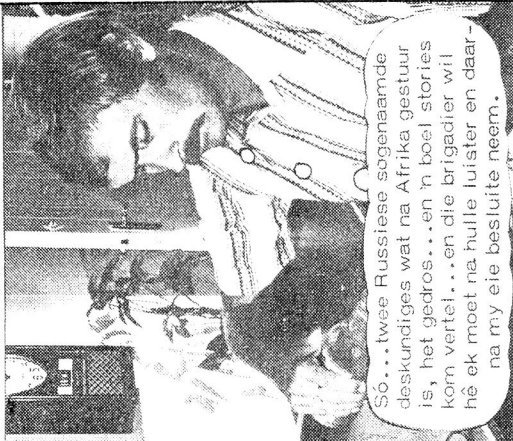
Ja, dis kaptein De Wet. Wie? Brigadier Jacobs? Vervlaks...ja, ek sal met hom praat.



DIE BRIGADIER FLIKFLOOI VEGTER, WANT DIE ALLEEN-LOPER IS NIE 'N SOLDAAT IN DIE GEWONE SIN VAN DIE WOORD NIE. HY AANVAAR OOK NIE BEVELE SOOS 'N GEWONE SOLDAAT OF OFFISIER NIE. NOGTANS WORD HY DEUR HULLE WAT MET HOM TE DOEN HET, MET DIE GROOTSTE AGTING BEHANDEL. WANT DAAR IS MAAR EEN SOOS HY...



DIE GESPREK, IN KODEWOORDE WAT VEGTER MAKLIK ONTLEED, DUUR ONGEVEER TIEN MINUTE.

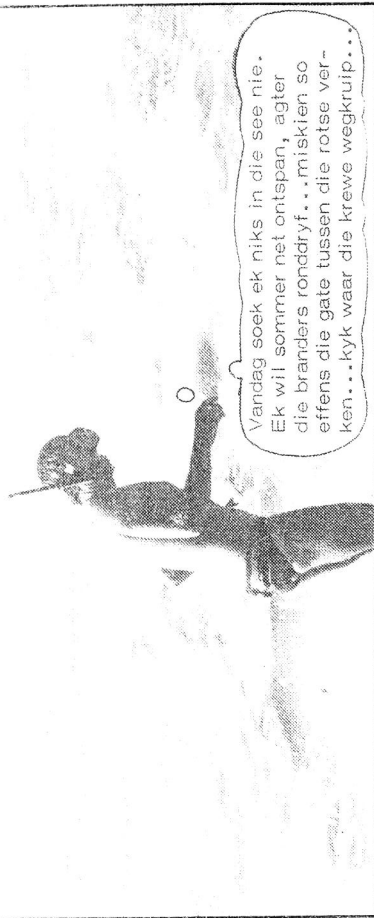


Só... twee Russiese sogenaamde deskundiges wat na Afrika gestuur is, het gedros... en 'n boel stories kom vertel... en die brigadier wil hê ek moet na hulle luister en daarna my eie besluite neem.

Ek hou nie van Russe nie, ook nie van drosters nie. Maar, nou ja... ek het ingewillig... al hou ek vankanse. Een is nogal 'n vrou... die brigadier se sy's heeltemal tets vir die oog.

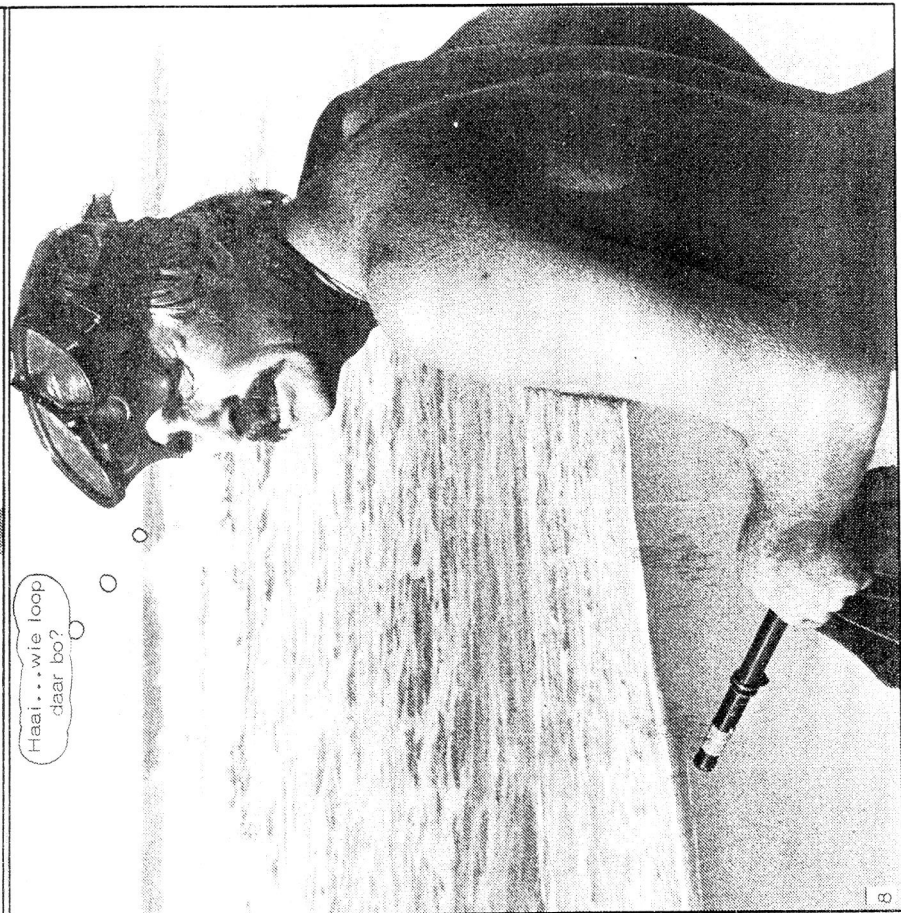


VROEERIG TWEE OGGENDE LATER STAP HY, SOOS GEWOONLIK, SEE TOE.



Vandag seek ek niks in die see nie.
Ek wil sommer net ontspan, agter
die branders rondryf... miskien so
effens die gate tussen die rotse ver-
ken... Kyk waar die krewes wegkruip...

Haal... wie loop
daar bo?



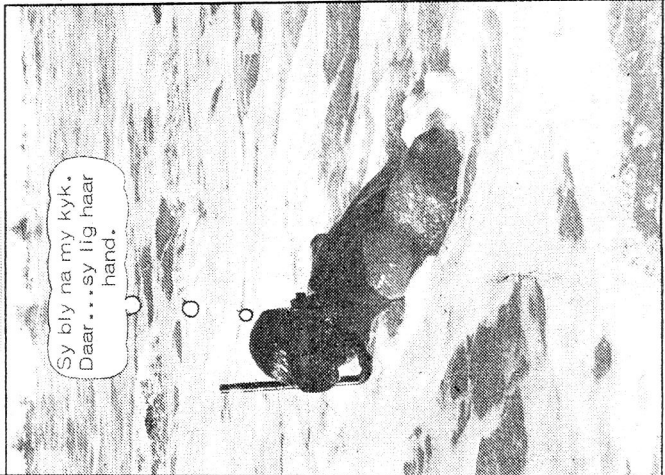
8

HY SAK IN DIE WATER NEER,
MAAR KYK TERUG.

Ois 'n meisie!



DAARDIE OPLIG VAN DIE HAND TOT
BOKANT DIE OE HET BETEKENIS.



Sy bly na my kyk.
Daar... sy lig haar
hand.

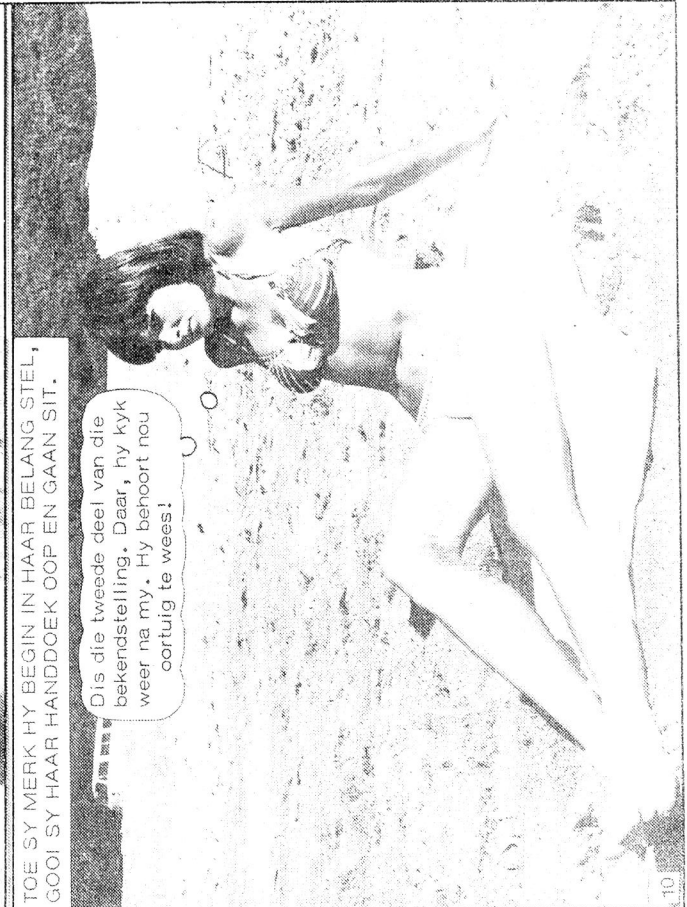
Die brigadier het gesê
sô moet ek my aan hom
bekend stel... as dit hy
is wat nou daar opstaan.

9

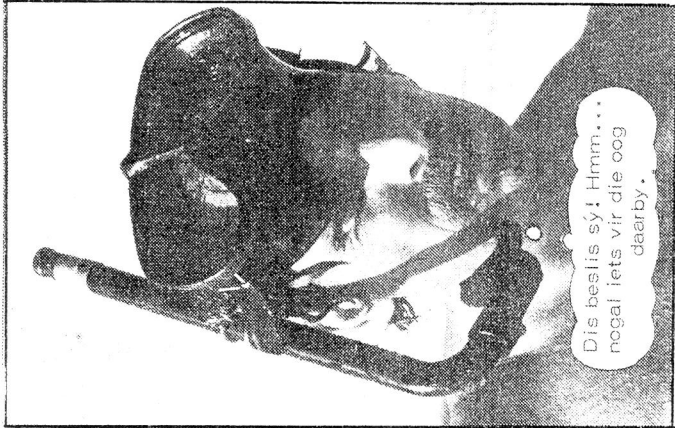


Dis dan sý... die Russiese meisie... Tanja Petrof... opgeleide soldateverpleegster. Sjoel!

TOE SY MERK HY BEGIN IN HAAR BELANG STEL, GOOI SY HAAR HANDDOEK OOP EN GAAN SIT.



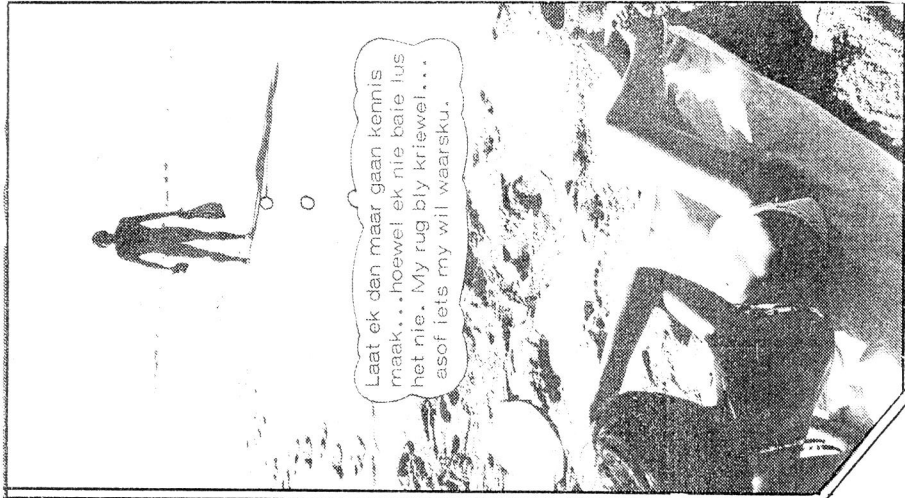
Dis die tweede deel van die bekendstelling. Daar, hy kyk weer na my. Hy behoort nou voortuig te wees!



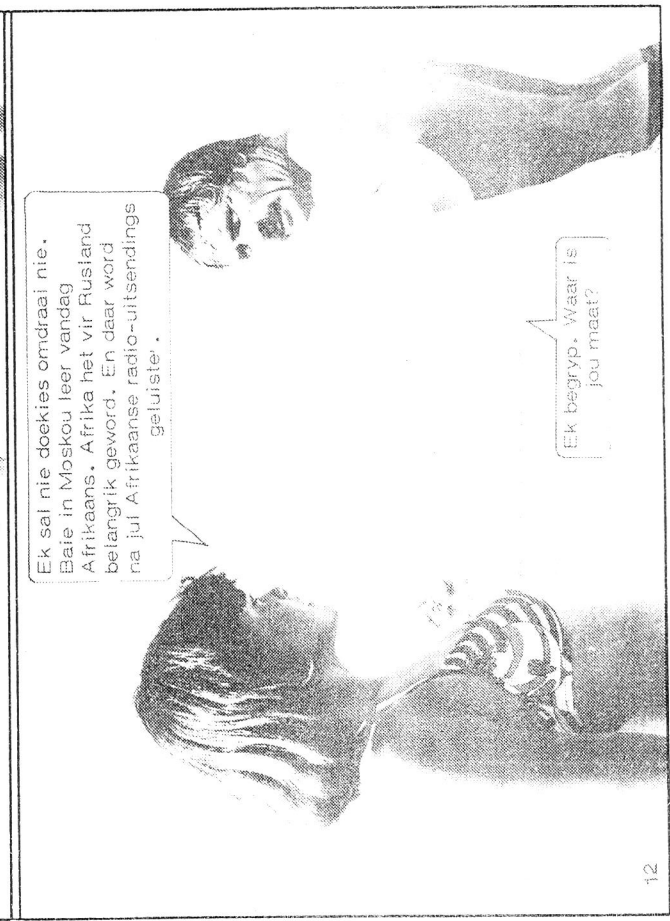
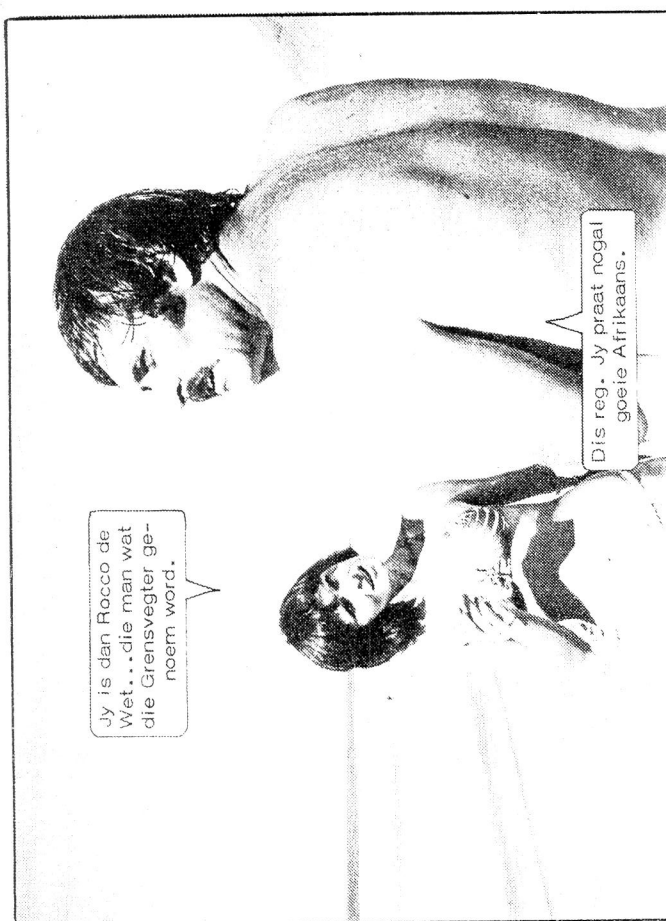
Dis beslis sý! Hmm... nogal iets vir die oog daarby.



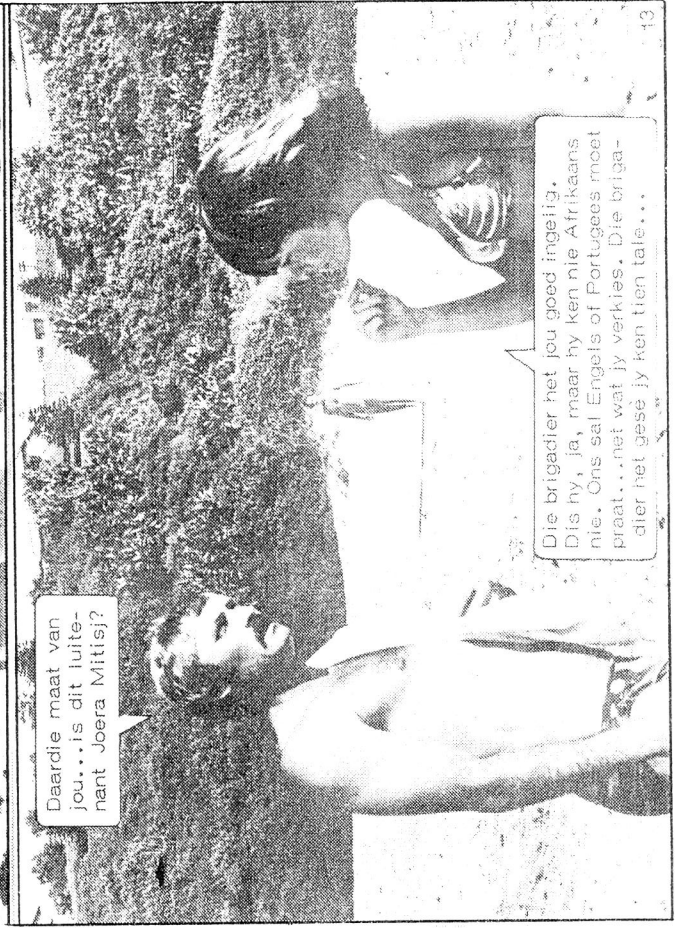
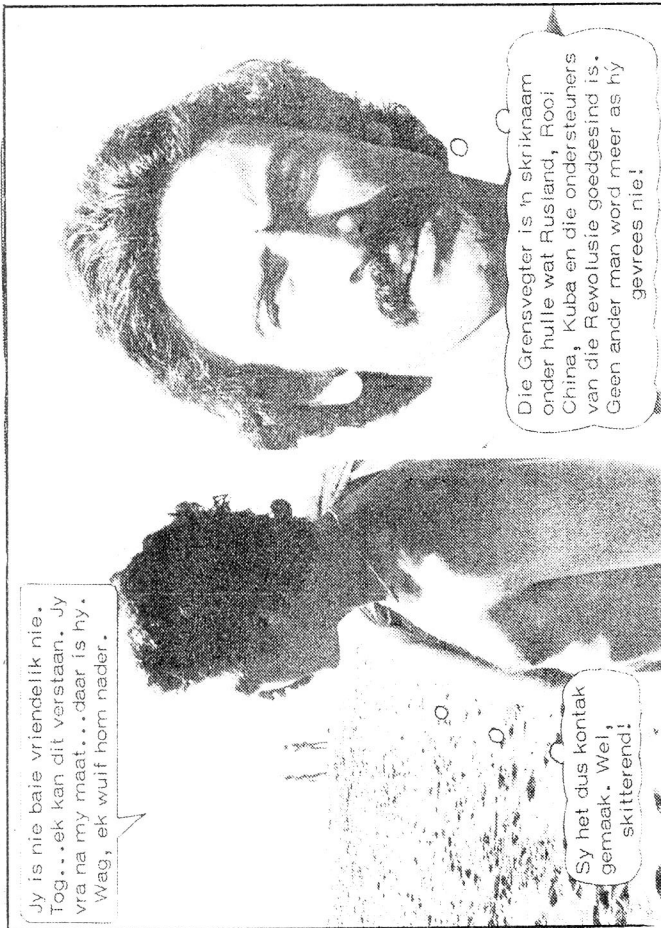
Tanja Petrof?



Laat ek dan maar gaan kennis maak... hoewel ek nie baie lus het nie. My rug bly kriel... asof iets my wil waarsku.



12



13

DIE TAAL WAAROP HULLE BESLUIT, IS PORTEUGEES.

Dis Joera, en d'is die Grensvegter.

Al ons inligting was reg, lyk dit my Tanja. Die kaptein is die man wat ons sal kan help.

Jy het 'n groot naam in Afrika, kaptein De Wet. Dis vir my 'n eer om met 'n man soos jy kennis te maak.

Hy lyk skaflik, opreg. Miskien is hy dit ook.

14

Die brigadier het gesê ons kan net met een man praat. Dis jy. Ek en juffrou Tanja het genoeg rede om die kommunisme te haat. En ons het goeie inligting.

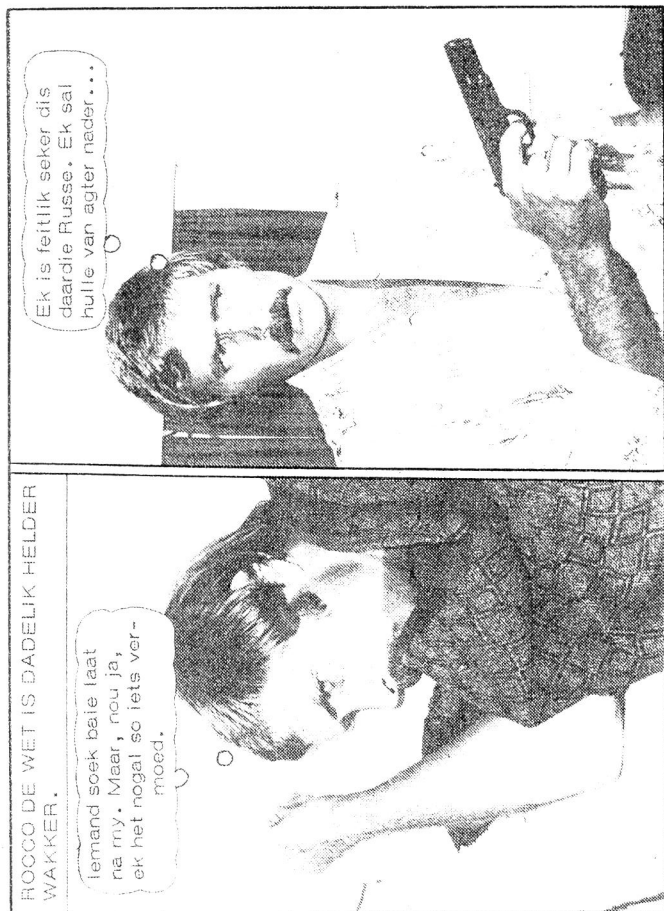
Goed, kom ons loop. My huis is bo-op die duin. Daar is slaapplek vir almal... en dis veilig daar... geen oë wat ons sien of ore wat ons kan af luister nie.

KORT VOOR MIDDERDAG KEER TANJA EGTER ALLEEN TERUG NA VEGTER SE VAKANSIEHUIS.

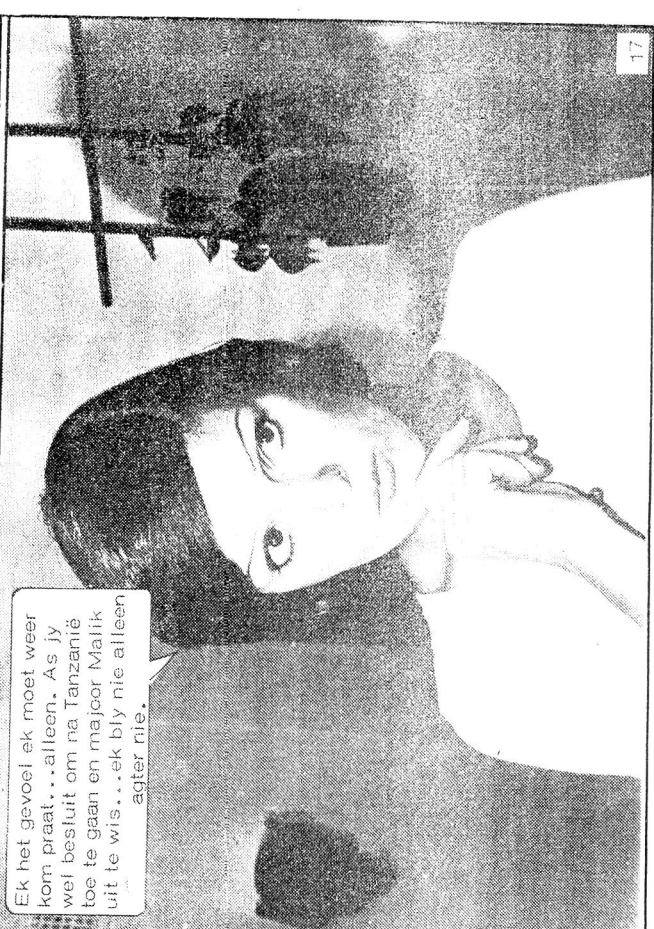
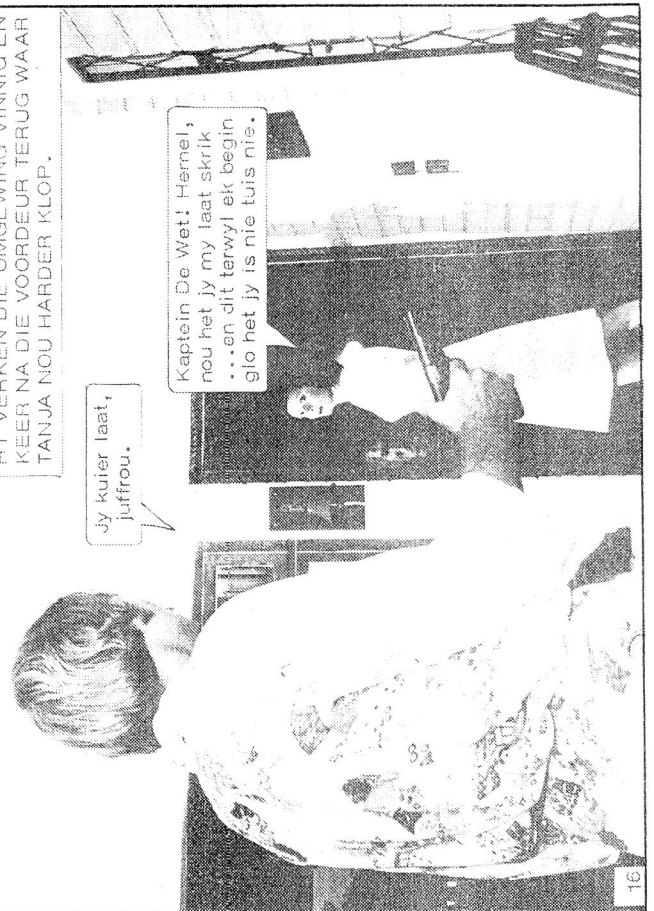
Geen man het my nog ooit so gou so diep beïndruk as hy nie...

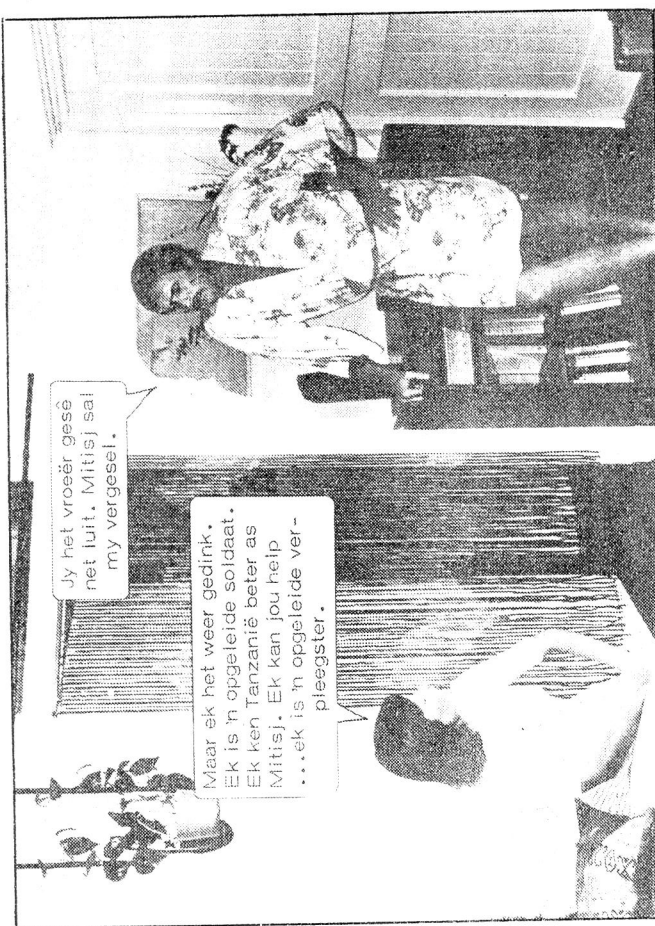
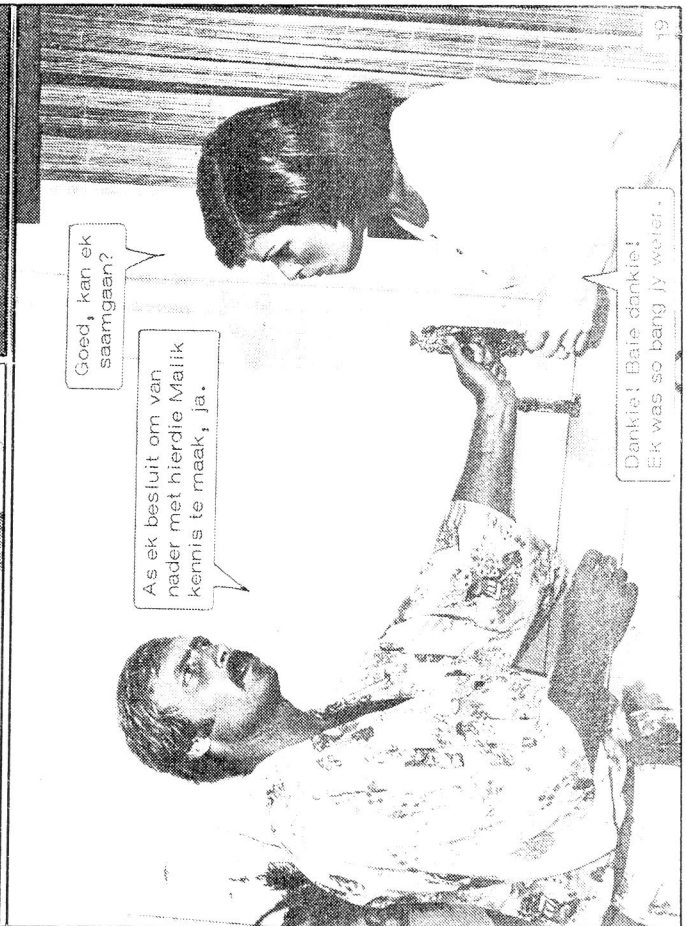
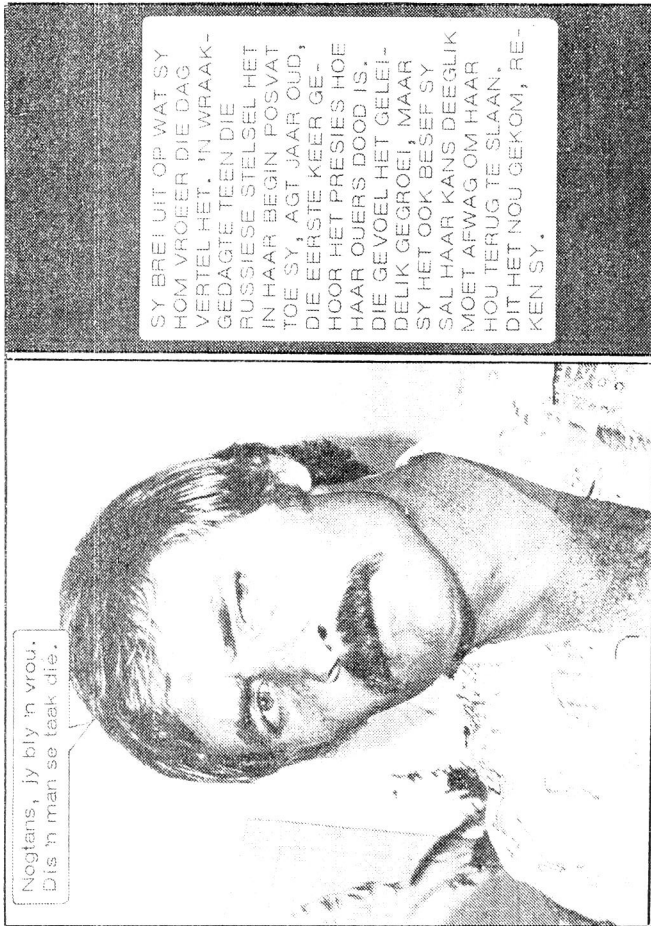
HULLE PRAAT ANDERHALFUR VOOR TANJA PETROF EN LUITENANT JOERA MIT'SJ VERTREK. ELK VAN DIE TWEE RUSSE GEE AANVAARBARE REDES WAAROM HULLE GEDROS HET. DAAR WORD BESLUIT DAT DIE GESPREK LATER VOORTGESIT SAL WORD.

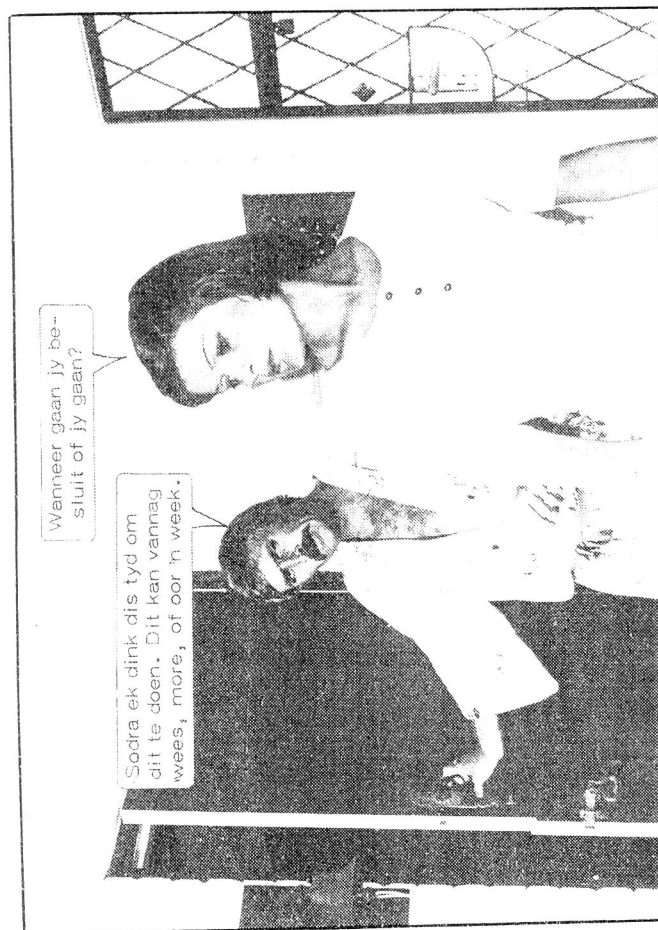
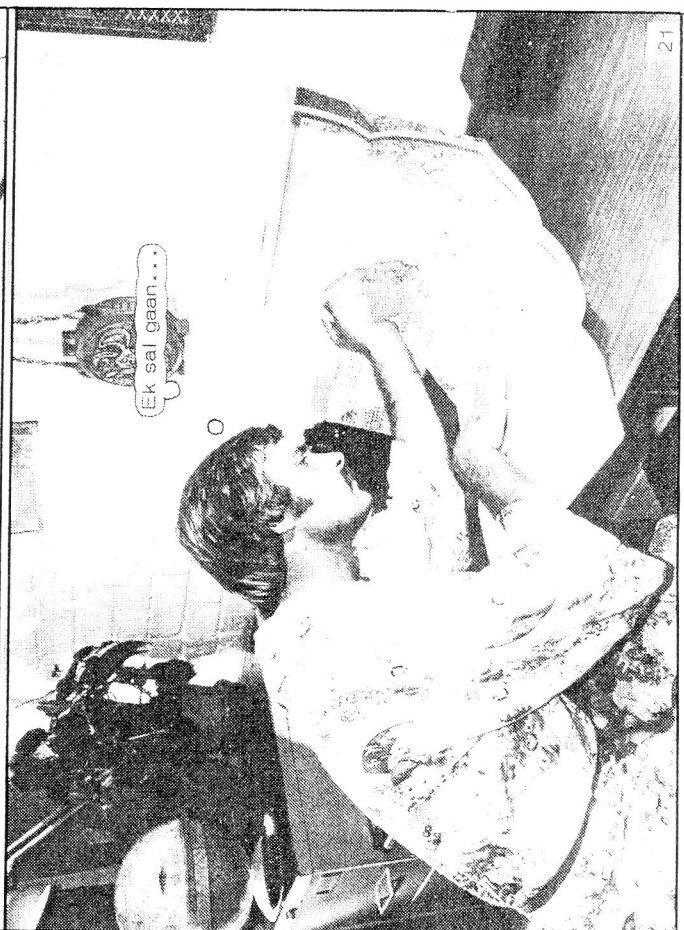
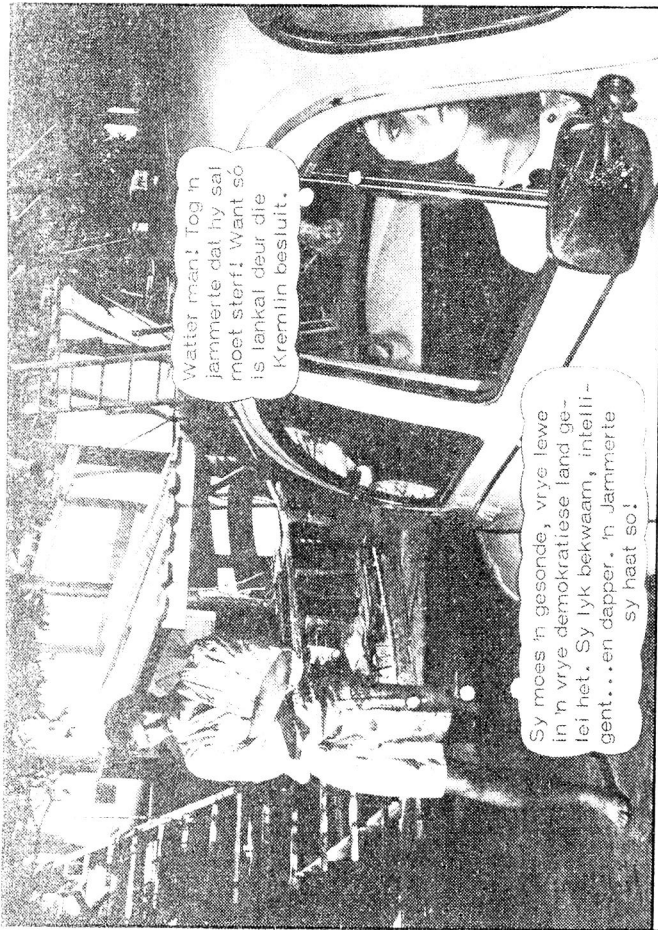
15



HY VERKEN DIE OMGEWING VINNIG EN KEER NA DIE VOORDEUR TERUG WAAR TANJA NOU HARDER KLOP.









Jy sê Malik se nes in hier iewers?

Bate naby. Ek sou sê vier uur se flinke stap lê nog voor.



Hier het ons vliegtuig brandstof ingeneem, en hier. Miskien het iemand daar die snuf in die neus gekry...mens weet nooit.

Jy bedoel...ons is in 'n stadium dalk met radar gevolg...en toe het iemand alarm gemaak nadat hulle ons valskeims gesien het?



Niks is onmoontlik nie. Daar word wel gesoek, en dis nêr om dowe neute nie. Die vyand weet iets.

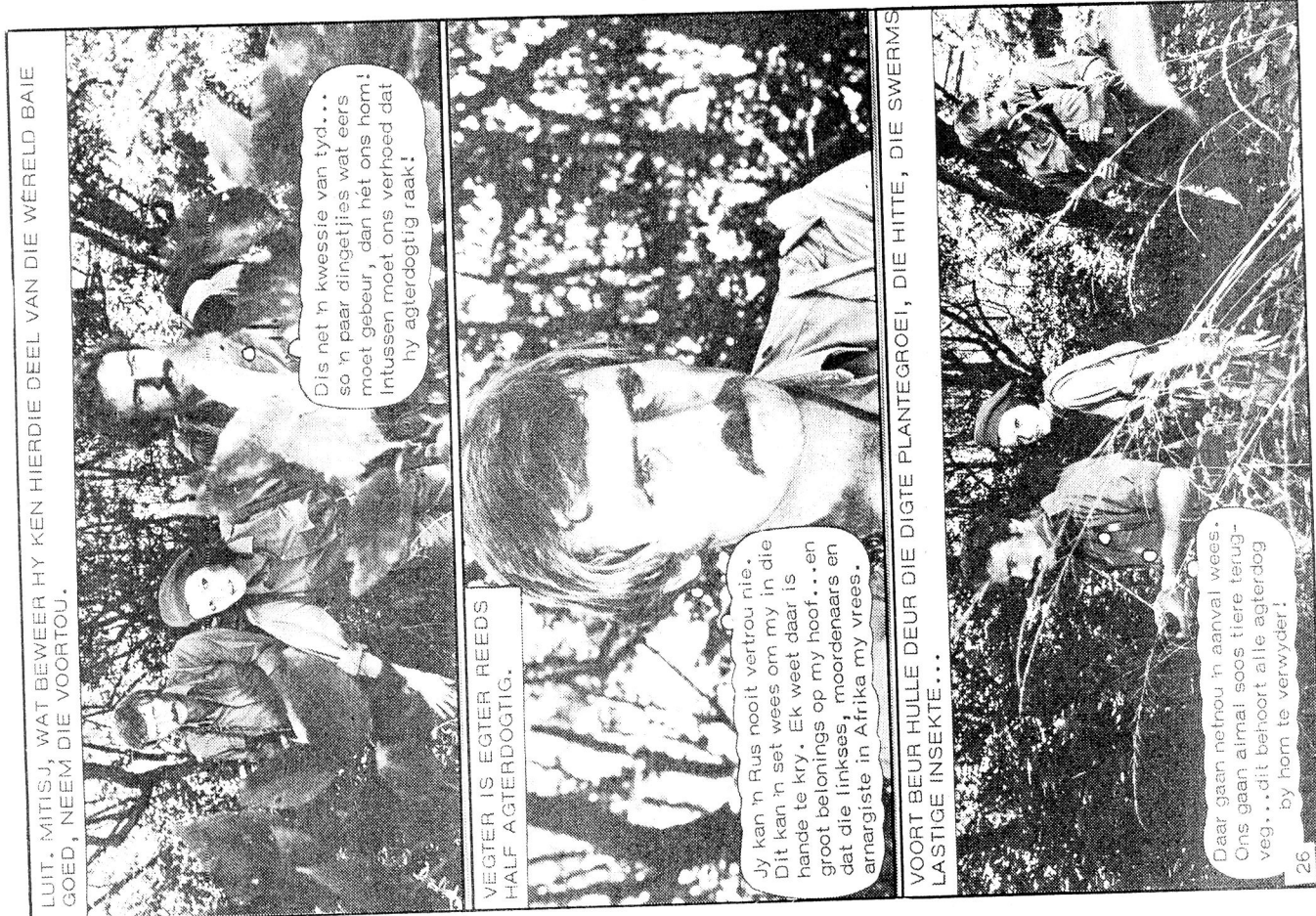
Laat hulle vervlaks soek. Hulle sal ons nooit kry nie!



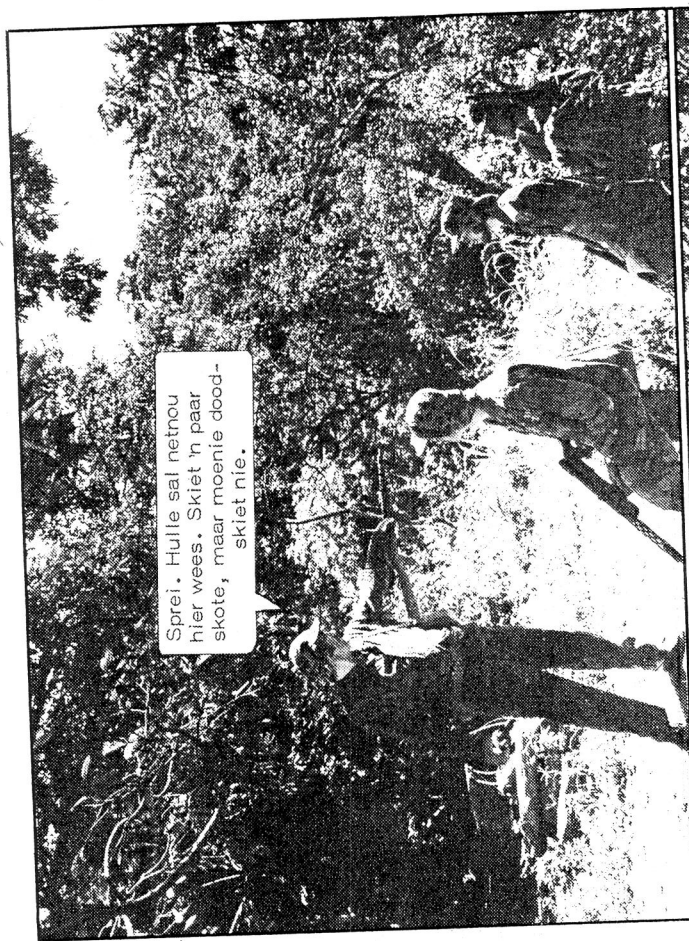
Rocco is onrustig. Hy wantrou alles. Hy stel aanhoudend vrae. Ver- trou hy ons dalk nie?



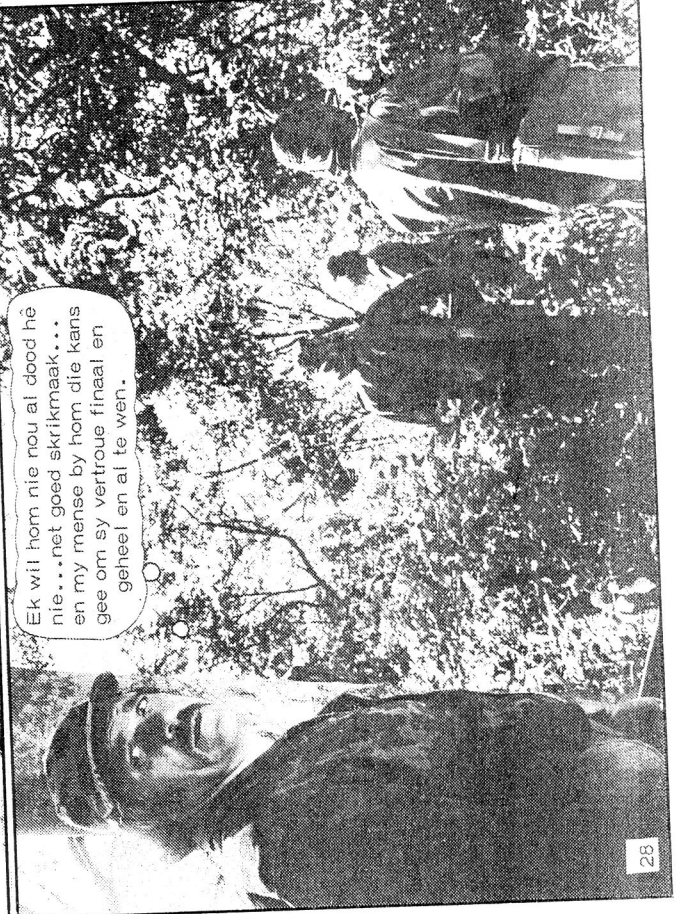
27



26



Sprei. Hulle sal netnou hier wees. Skiet 'n paar skote, maar moenie doodskiet nie.



Ek wil hom nie nou al dood hê nie... net goed skrikmaak... en my mense by hom die kans gee om sy vertroue finaal en geheel en al te wen.

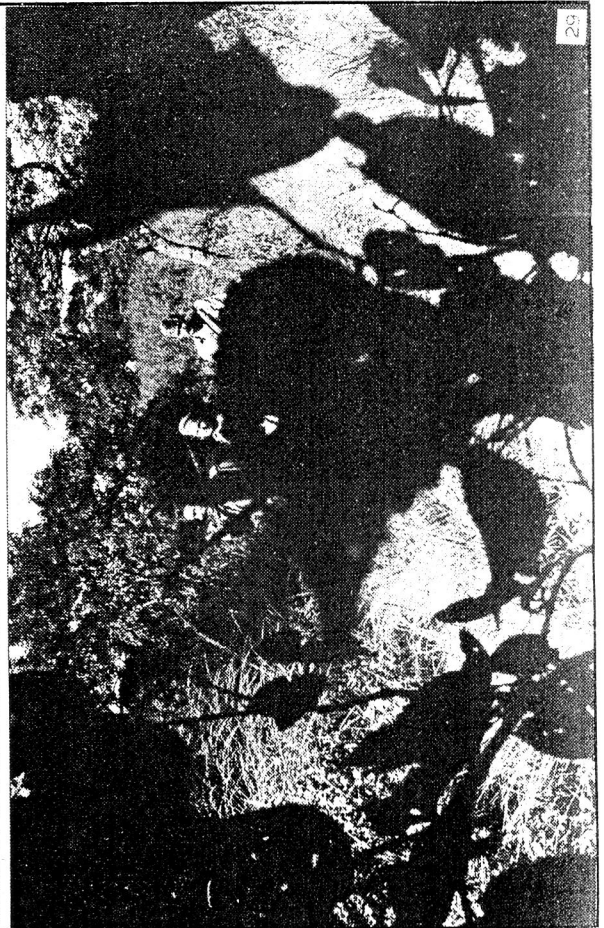


Daar!

Sjout...

HULLE VERSPREI IN DIE BOS, EN STEL HUL HINDERLAAG OP. DAN WAG HULLE, VYF, TIEN MINUTE... 'N KWARTIER.

HULLE KOM NADER... DRIE MENSE. TWEE WEEET IETS GAAN BINNEKORT GE-
BEUR, DIE DERDE, VEGTER, WEEET DIT NIE, HOEWEL HY AGTERDOGTIG BLY.
JARE IN DIE BOS HET HOM DIT GELEER.





Ek gaan die Rooi
Majoor waarsku!

Doen dit, maar moenie
so hard praat nie. n Mens
weet nooit hoe goed die
Grensvegter se ore is nie.



Dis kaptein Ossakof...
kom in, majoor.

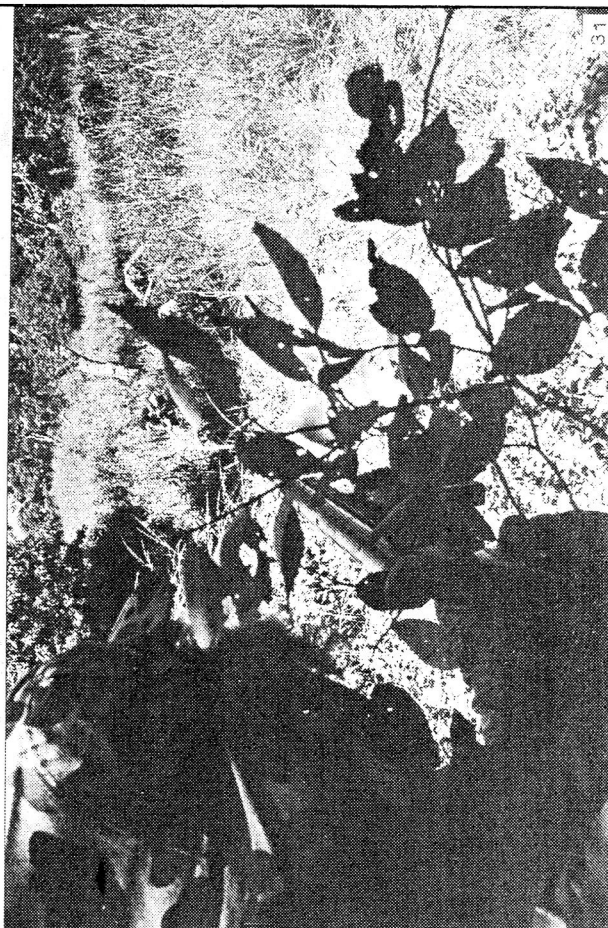
30



DIE ROOI MAJOOR ANTWOORD FEITLIK DADELIK.

Goed, maak hulle skrik.
Maar, vervlaks, moenie
manne gaan staan en ver-
loor nie. Onthou...Wolof
moet deur lui. Mitsj ge-
vang word. Ek wil nie ander
ongevalle hê nie.

ENKELE SEKONDES LATER KNETTER DIE EERSTE AUTOMATIESE GEWEER.
KOEELS FLUIT OM VEGTER-HULLE.



31

DADELIK SORG LUIT. JOERA MITISJ DAT HY VAN VEGTER EN TANJA GE-
SKEI WORD.

Wat ek nou gaan doen,
sal in normale om-
standighede 'n helde-
daad wees!



ALLES IS DEUR VEGTER SE VYANDE HAARFYN BEPLAN...DIE SKYNAANVAL,
DIE SKIETERY. EN TOG IS EEN FLATER BEGAAN TERWYL HULLE BETER MOES
GEWEET HET...HULLE HET VEGTER ONDERSKAT!

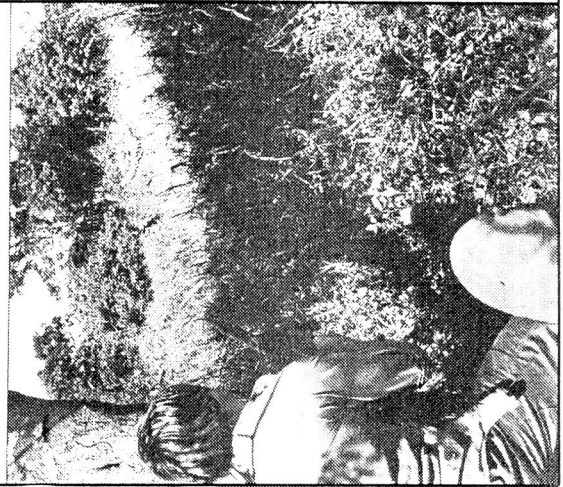


32

WANT HY SLAAN SOOS 'N BRIESENDE LEEU TERUG...ONVERSKROKKE,
VEGTER WAT HY IS!



ALLES MOES BLOEDLOOS VERLOOP
HET...SÓ IS DIT BEPLAN. MAAR NOU
VUUR DIE GRENSVEGTER MET DODE-
LIKE AKKURAATHEID.



Verdui wels!

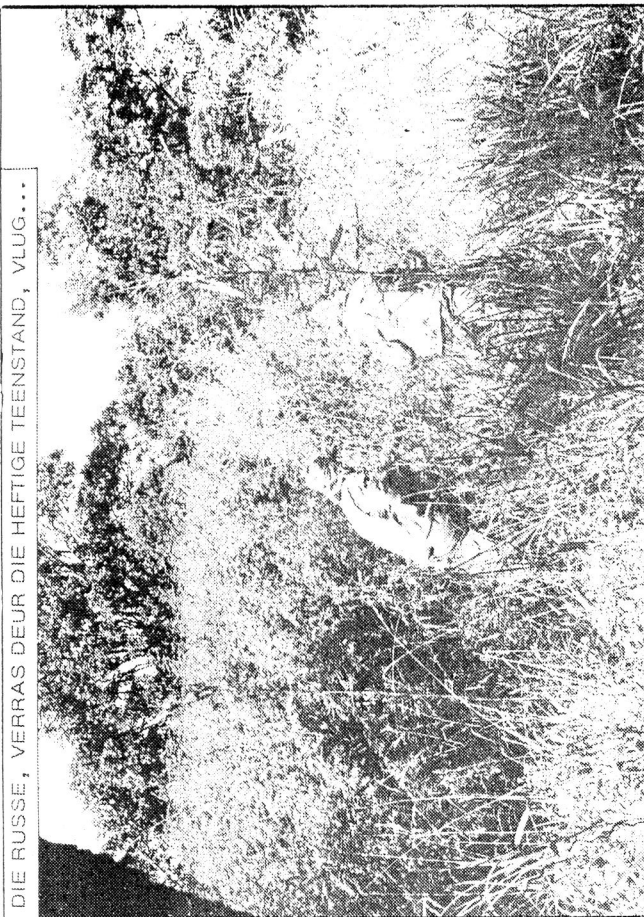


33



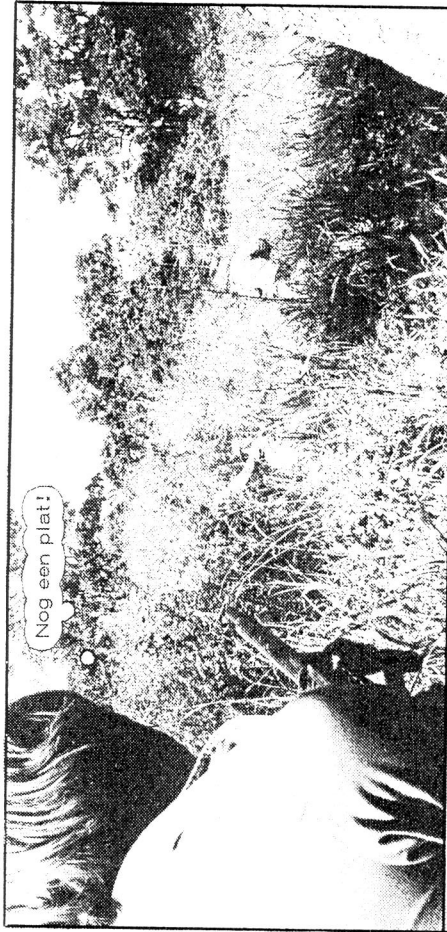
IETS IS IN TANJA AAN DIE GEBEUR. HIERDIE MAN IS HAAR VYAND. 'N
DUIWELSE PLAN IS TEEN HOM GESMEE. EN TOG...HAAR BEWONDERING
VIR HOM GROEI...EN GROEI...





DIE RUSSE, VERRAS DEUR DIE HEFTIGE TEENSTAND, VLUG...

EN WEER 'N KEER IS DIE MAN WAT IN AFRIKA REEDS 'N LEGENDE GE-
WORD HET, DAAR MET 'N KNETTERENDE GEWEER!



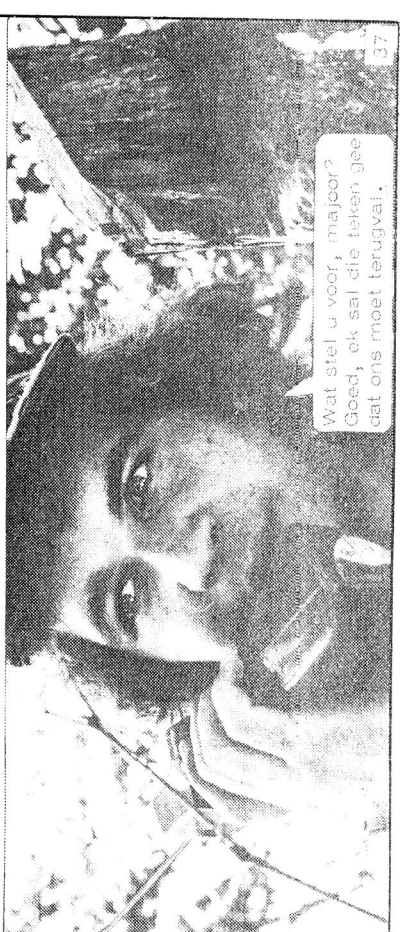
Nog een plat!

SKIELIK IS DAAR KOMMER,
ONTSTELTENIS... SELFS VREES.

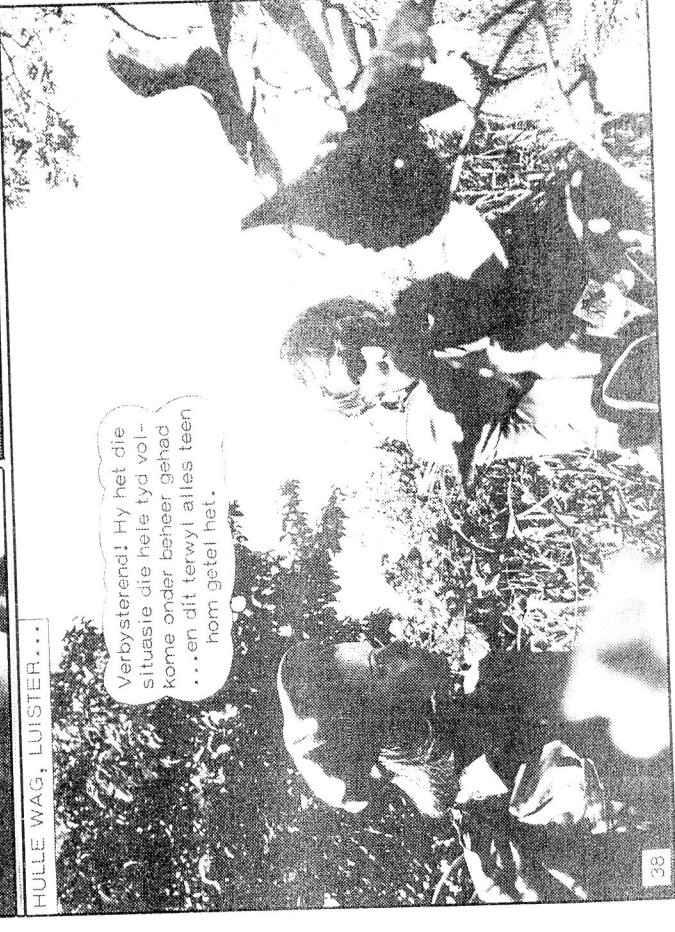
Hy het net verdwyn!
Hy kan enige plek
wees... en hy skiet
sy koeëls reguit en
dodelik!



KAPTEIN LOEKA OSSAKOF BESEF METEREENS DAT ALLES NIE MEER VOLGENS
PLAN VERLOOP NIE. HY RAPPORTEER DADELIK...



Wat stel u voor, majoor?
Goed, ek sal die teken gee
dat ons moet terugval.





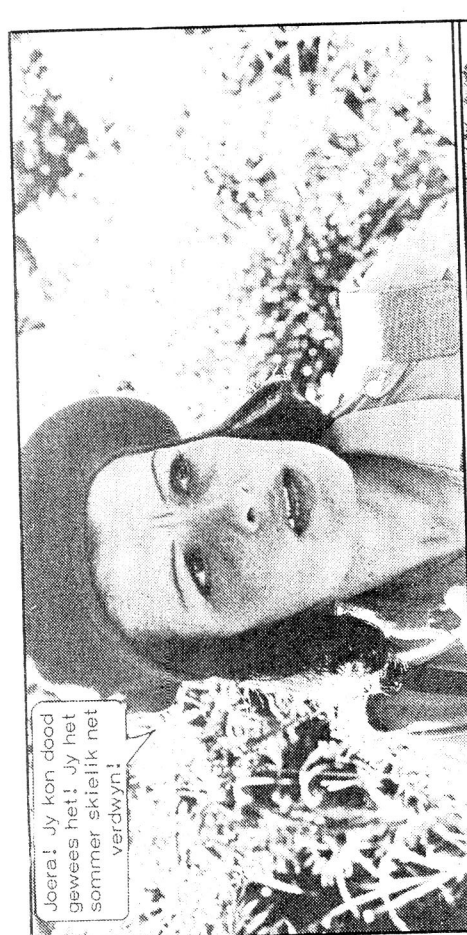
Goed, nou praat jy!
Ek wil alles weet
...en jy vertel alles,
of ek sny jou ore en
neus af!

INTUSSEN HET DIE ROOI MAJOOR EN 'N PAAR VAN SY MANNE NA HUL VOERTUIG TERUGGEKEER. HULLE DRINK STERK, SWART RUSSIESE KOFFIE.

Ons het wel 'n man of
twee verloor, kamerade,
maar alles verloop nog
volgens plan.



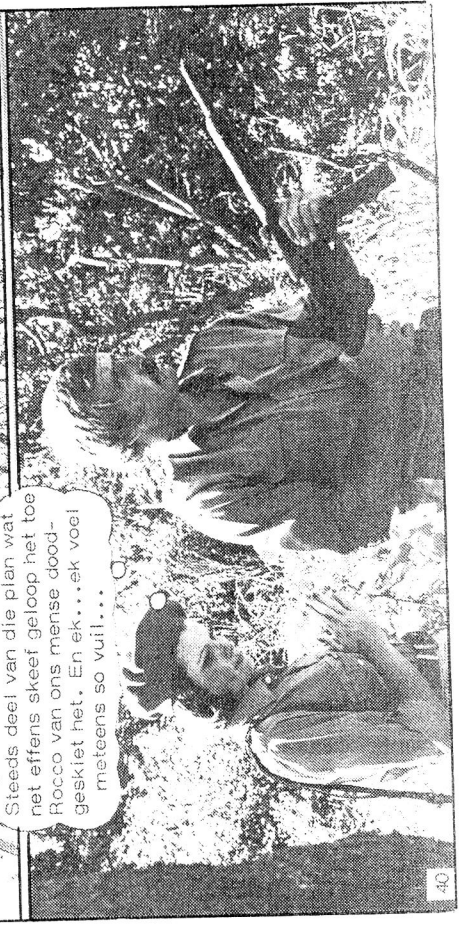
41



Joera! Jy kon dood
gewees het! Jy het
sommers skielik net
verdwyn!



Ek leef nog, en ons het
die vent. Hy kan praat.
Hy kan vertel wat aan
die gang is.



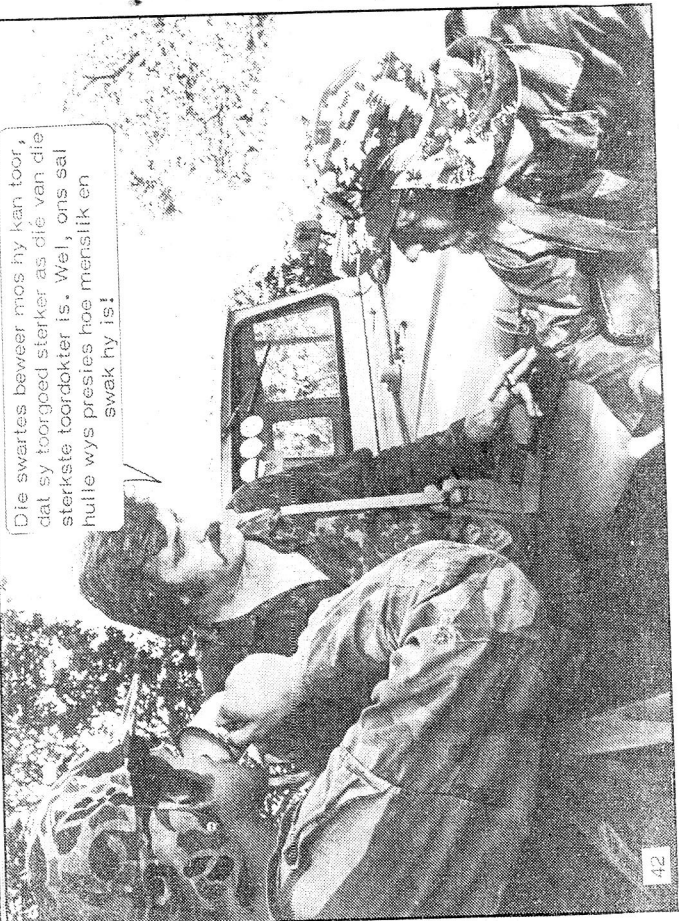
Steeds deel van die plan wat
net effens skeef geloop het toe
Rocco van ons mense dood-
geskiet het. En ek...ek voel
meteens so vuil...

40

Dis nou net 'n uur of wat wat oorbly, dan het ons hom... lewendig. En sodra ons hom het, vernietig ons die invloed wat hy oor Swart Afrika het.



Die swartes beweer mos hy kan toor, dat sy toorgoed sterker as dié van die sterkste toordokter is. Wel, ons sal hulle wys presies hoe menslik en swak hy is!



42

Dis alles goed en wel, maar ek sal eers gerus voel as ons hom het... behoorlik vasgebind...



INTUSSEN HET DIE GEVANGENE RUS GEPRaat... NATUURLIK NET IN RUSSIES, MAAR DAAR IS GOU AGTERGEKOM DAT VEGTER DIE TAAL MAGTIG IS. NOU VOLG HULLE SY INLIGTING OP.



43





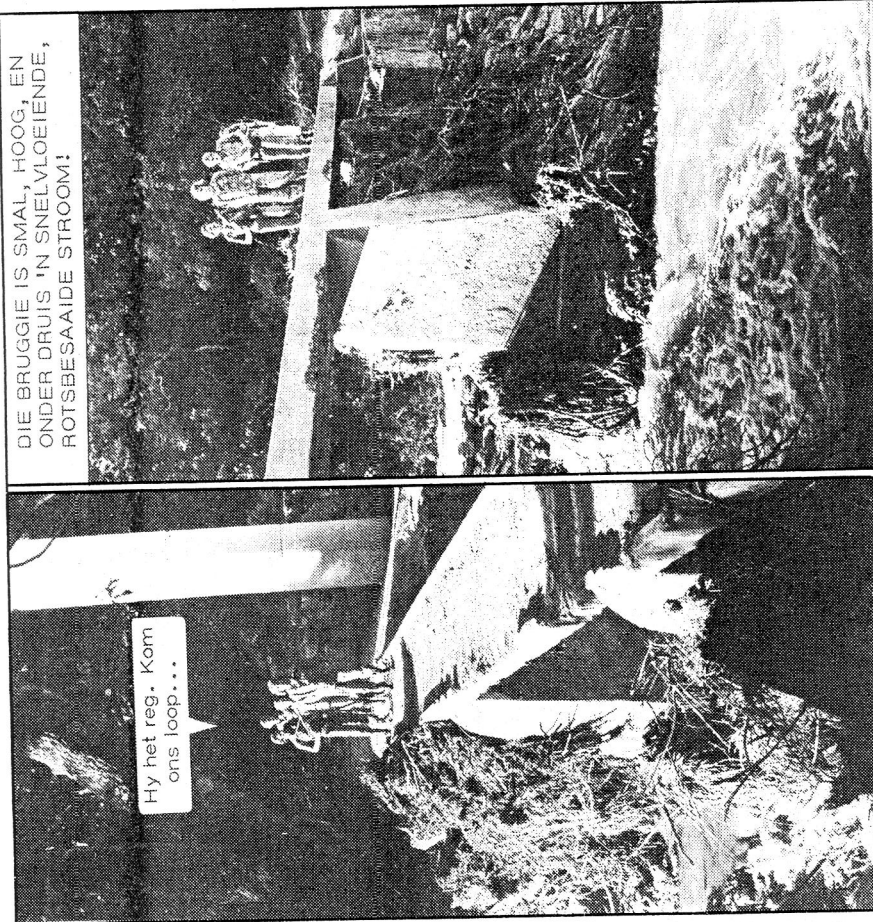
'N RUS VERSKYN AGTER HULLE,
MAAR HY PRAAT NIE...



EN DAN, SKIELIK, VOOR HULLE;
DOEM NOG 'N RUS OP.

Halt!

47



DIE BRUGGIE IS SMAL, HOOG, EN
ONDER DRUIS 'N SNELVLOEIENDE,
ROTSBESAAIDE STROOM!

Hy het reg. Kom
ons loop...

TUSSEN DIE BOME BEWEEG DIE GROOT GESTALTE VAN DIE ROOI MAJOR.
HY GEE DIE TEKEN...



45



DIE RUS TUIMEL VAN DIE BRUG AF EN VAL HOM TE PLETTER.



EN TOE GEBEUR DIT...LUIT. JOERA MITISJ TOON HOM IN SY WARE GEDAANTE.

Dis genoeg, De Wet. Nog 'n beweging, en ek blaas jou vol koeëls!

49



NIEMAND VERWAG SO 'N REAKSIE NIE, MAAR DAN...NIEMAND KEN VEGTER WERKLIK NIE. HY HANDEL ONVERWAGS, BLITSSNIE.



SY GEVREESDE BYLTJIE TOL DEUR DIE LUG, TREF MET DODELIKE AKKURAAITEID!

48

SY ANTWOORD NIE, LAAT HAAR KOP NET SKIELIK SKAAM SAK.



En jy, Tanja...jy was die hele tyd deel van hierdie plan?



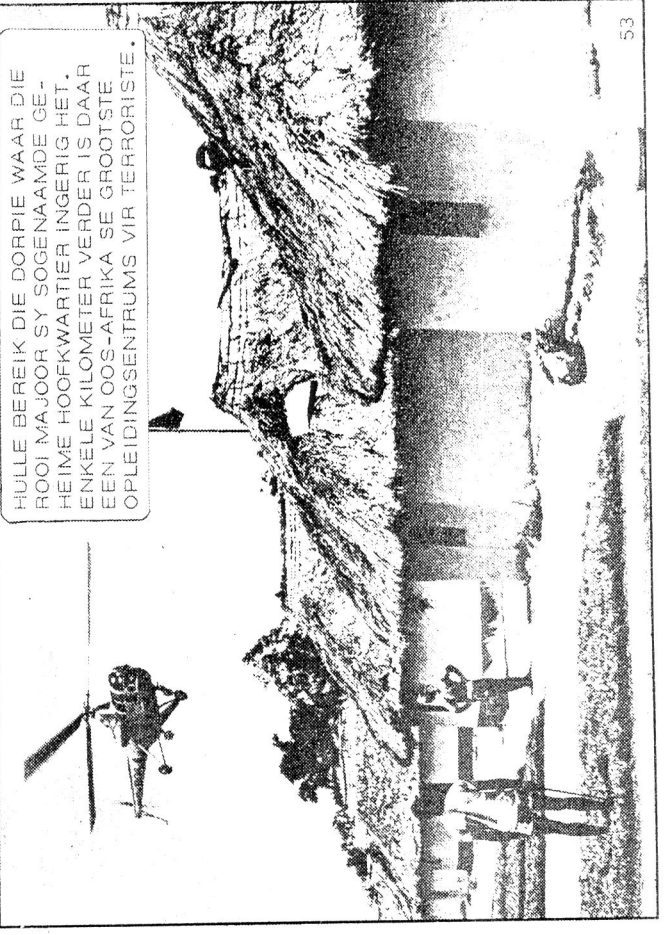
MITISJ IS SKIELIK ONGEDULDIG. SY STEM-TOON HET VERANDER, VYANDIG GEWORD.



Sy is een van ons, Boer...n goeie Rus. Jy het soos 'n kind aan ons aas gesluk. Jy gaan swaar sterf!



HULLE BEREIK DIE DORPIE WAAR DIE ROOI MAJOOR SY SOGENAAMDE GE-HEIME HOOFKWARTIER INGERIG HET. ENKELE KILOMETER VERDER IS DAAR EEN VAN OOS-AFRIKA SE GROOTSTE OPLEIDINGSENTRUMS VIR TERRORISTE.



EN SO, WORD GEHOOP, SAL
DIE VREESLEGENDE VAN DIE
GRENSEVEGTER STERF!



MAAR ANDER DINGE IS OOK
AAN DIE GEBEUR... 'N STRYD
IS IN TANJA PETROF ONTKETEN.

Hierdie man... hy kla nie,
hy skree nie om hulp nie,
hy bly trots! Teen hom
word Malik 'n dwerg, 'n
sadis, 'n skurk!



EN HIER, NET BUITE DIE DORP, WORD BEGIN OM VEGTER STELSELMATIG
AF TE TAKEL... TOT HY, MET SO MIN UITWENDIGE BESERINGS AS MOONTLIK,
'N MENSELIKE WRAK WORD.



EERS WANNEER HY DIT IS, SAL HY NA DIE TERRORISTEOPLEIDINGSKAMP
GEBRING WORD. DAAR SAL VERTEL WORD WIE HY IS...







58



59

VERWOED KOM DIE ROOI MAJOR RIGOP.



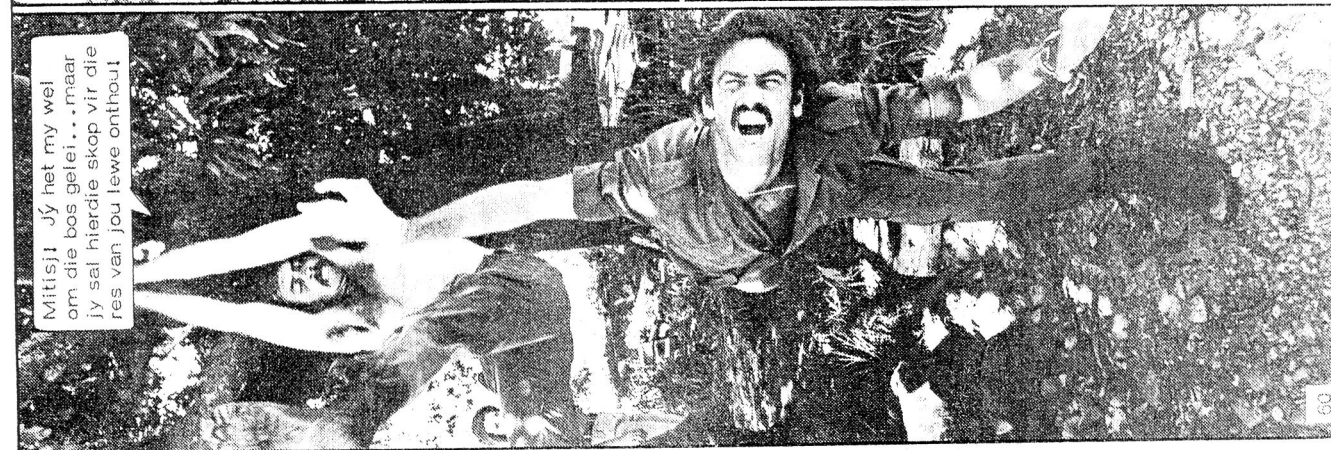
Miskien het jy my kwaad gemaak sodat ek jou dadelik moet doodskiet...



Ek moker jou uitmekaar!



Dis wat jy dink!



Mittsji! Jy het my wel om die bos getel... maar jy sal hierdie skop vir die res van jou lewe onthou!



EN DAN, GELUKKIG VIR HOM, VOU 'N DUISTERNIS HOM TOE.



VIR TANJA HET ALLES TE VEEL GEWORD.

Ek ken dit nie meer verduur nie... arme man! En Malik-hulle gaan soos 'n spul boewe te kere... sadiste, dis wat hulle is! Gevoelloose barbare!



Maar as dit jou hoop was, Boer, het jy dit mis. Ek gaan jou vermorsel, ja, maar die vryheidsvegters seif sal jou teregstel!



HY BEGIN VEGTER MOKER... OP PLEKKE WAAR DIT SEER MAAK... VERAL INWENDIG, WANT BUIE WIL HULLE HOM SO ONGESKONDE MOONTLIK HOU.





LATER BEDAAR HUL LAGBUI,
WORD HULLE WEER ERNSTIG.

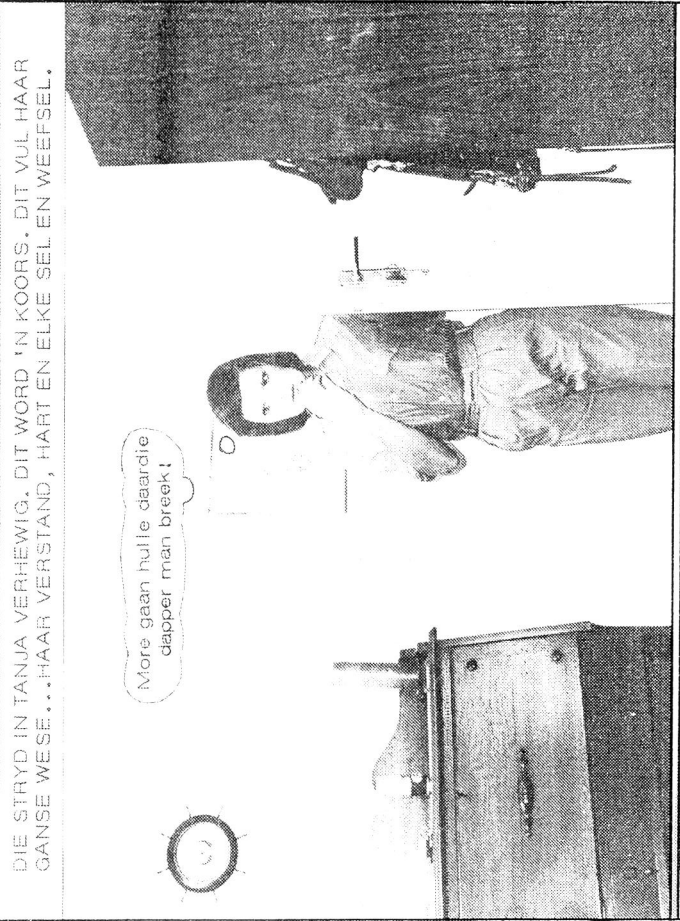
Hulle lag oor 'n
ander man se lot!

EN TOE BEGIN HULLE SING...RUSSIESE AGTERBUURTLIEDJES.

Dis veronderstel om snaaks
te wees, maar dit is nie...
dit pas net by hulle! Hulle
is kinders van die krotbuurte...



66



DIE STRYD IN TANJA VERHEWIG. DIT WORD 'N KOORS. DIT VUL HAAR
GANSE WESE...HAAR VERSTAND, HART EN ELKE SEL EN WEEFSEL.

More gaan hulle daardie
dapper man breek!

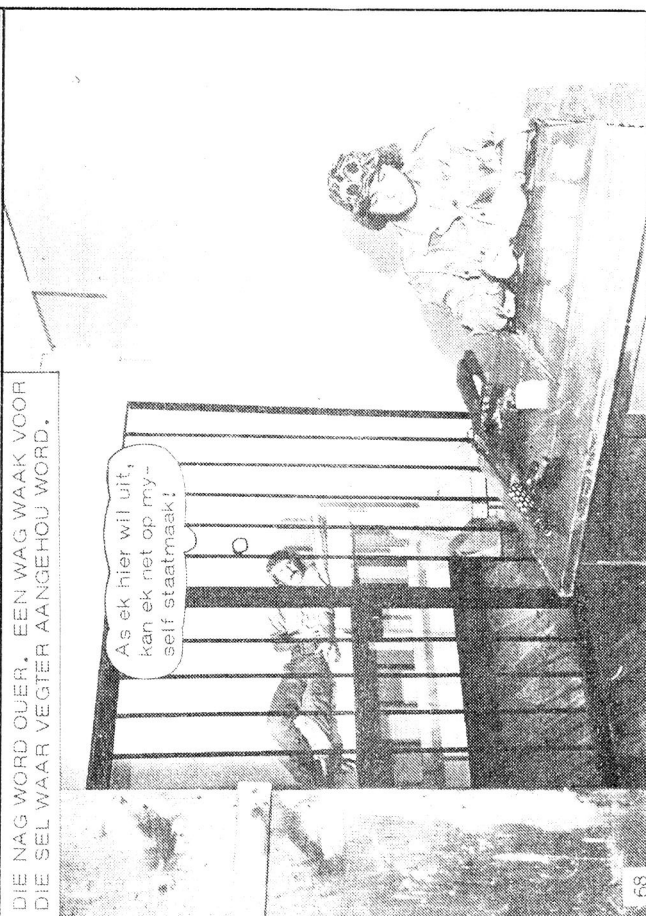


En dan gaan hy aan die vry-
heidsvegters uitgelewer word!
Hulle sal sy hart uitslag en dit
rou eet...sodat hulle so dapper
as hy kan word!

67



DIE NAG WORD OUER. EEN WAG WAAK VOOR DIE SEL WAAR VEGIER AANGEHOU WORD.



58



SKIELIK KREUN VEGIER.



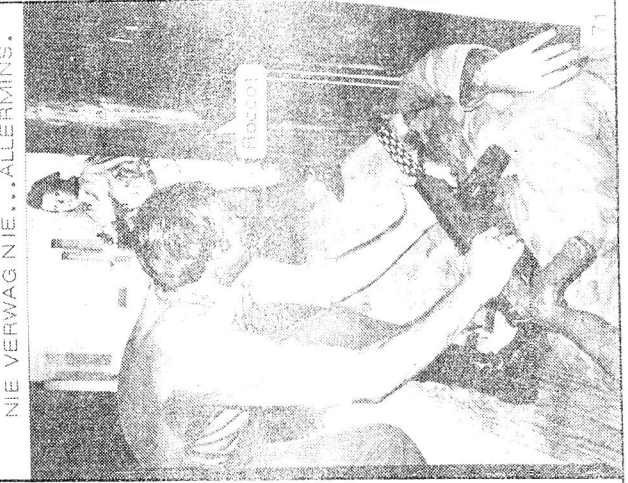
59



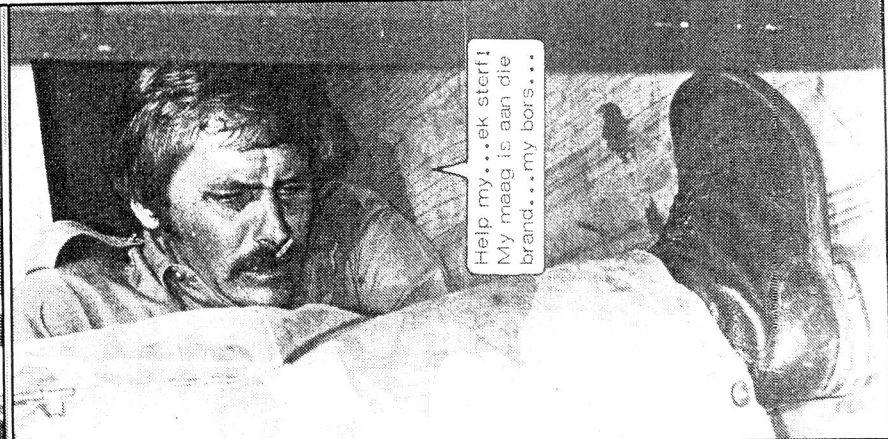
DIE WAG BUK, EN DAN...

WAT SY OP AFKOM, HET TANJA
NIE VERWAG NIE... ALLERMIN.

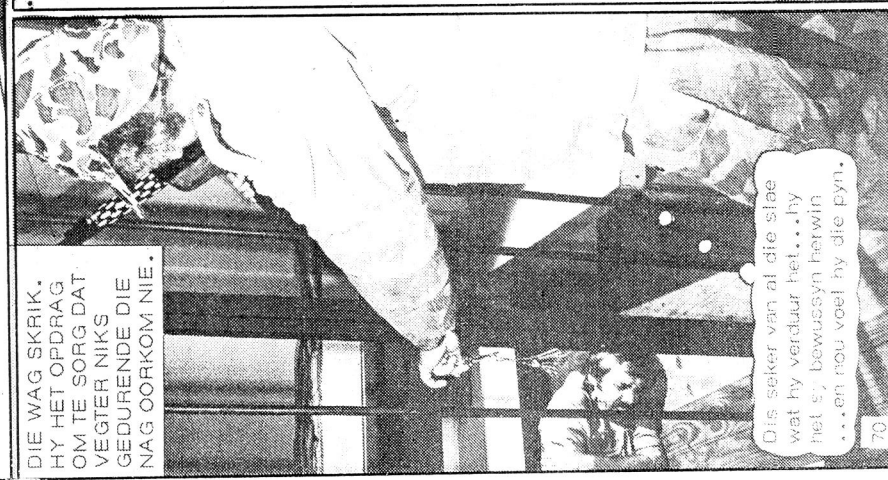
BINNE SEKONDES IS ALLES VERBY.



WEER KREUN HY... TOE KOM WURGENTE GELUIDE...

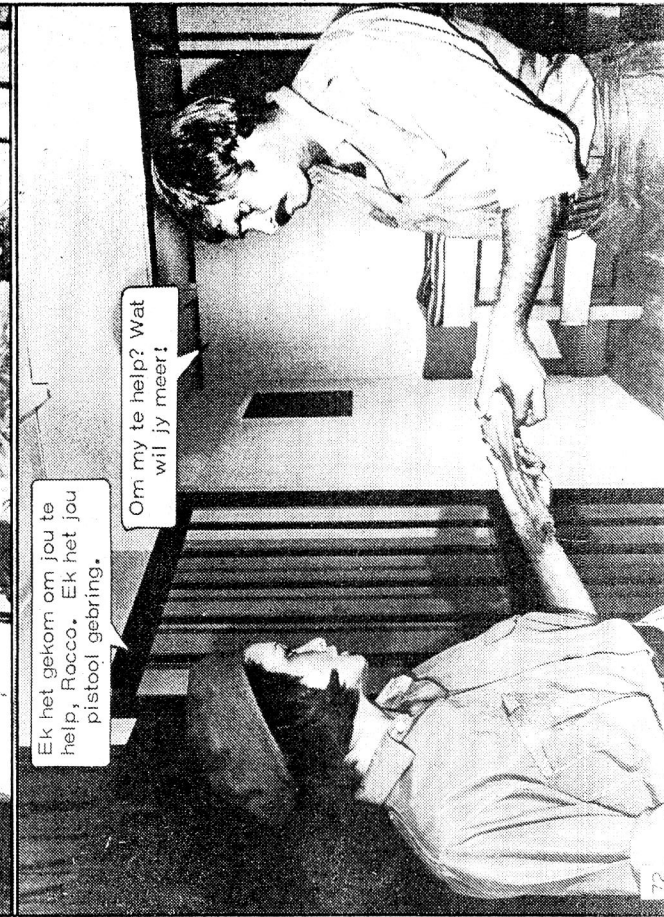
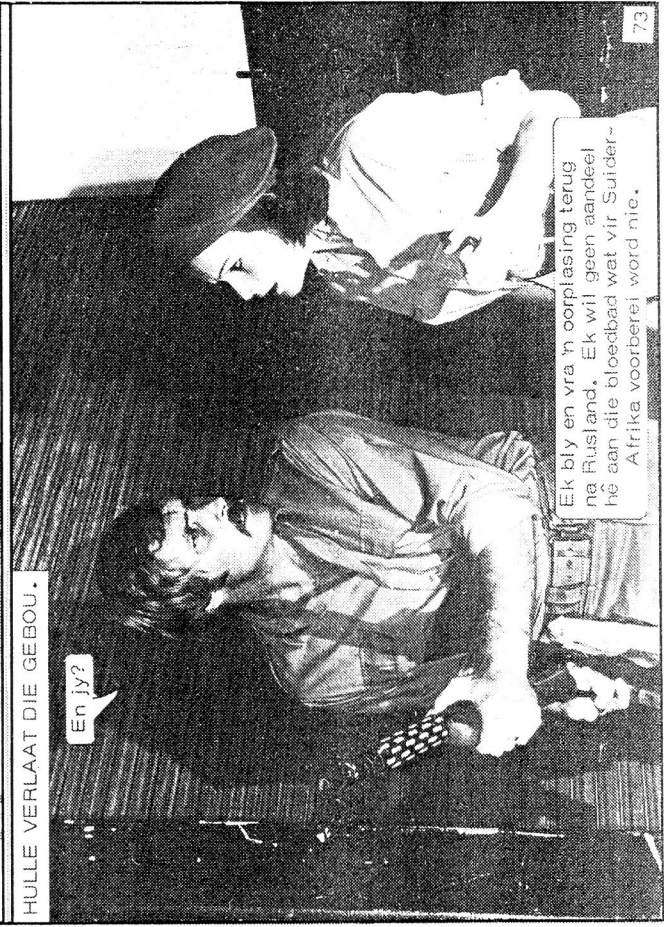
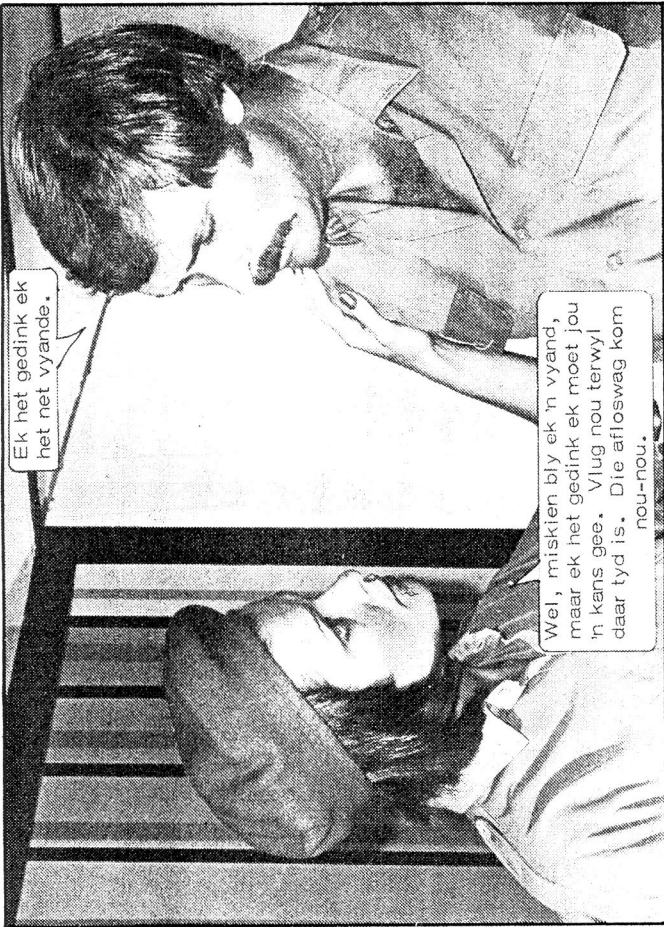


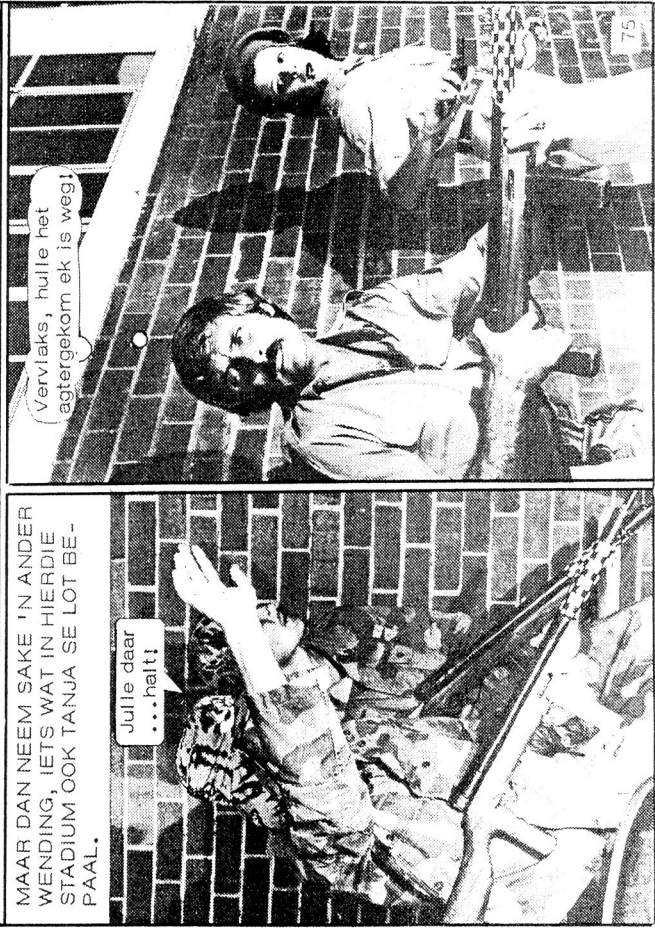
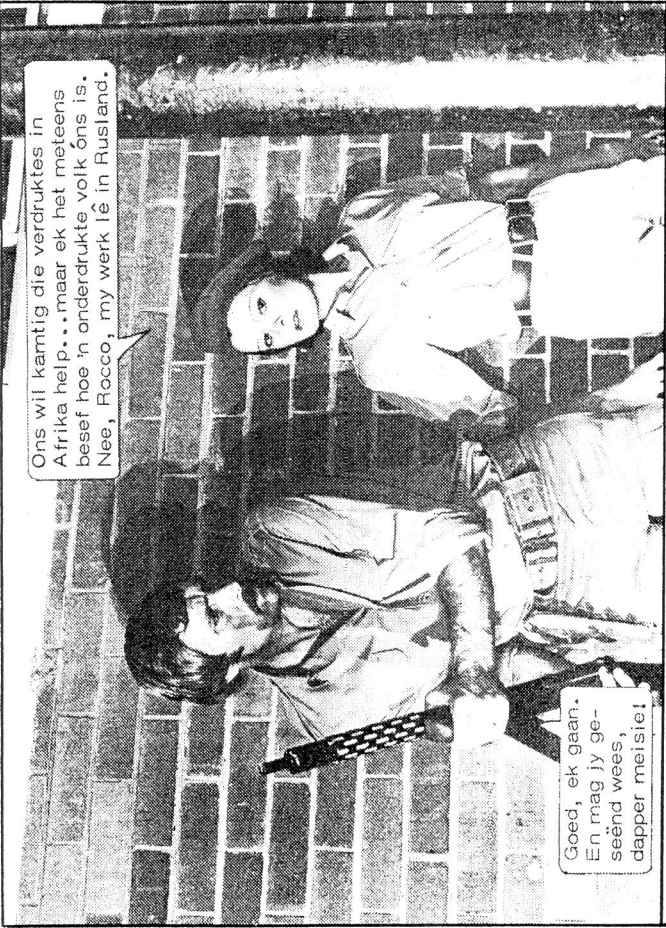
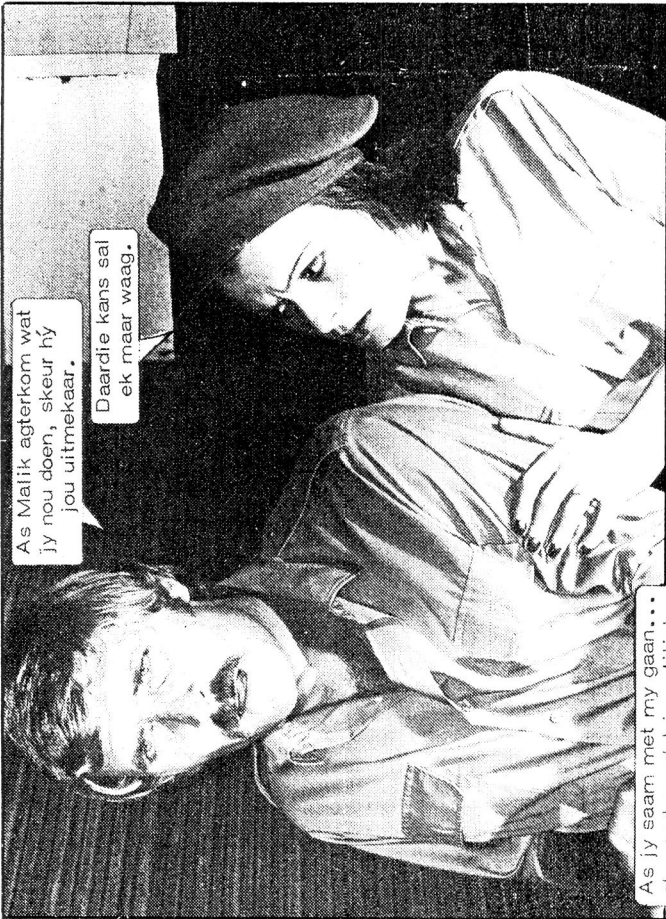
Help my... ek sterf!
My maag is aan die
brand... my bors...

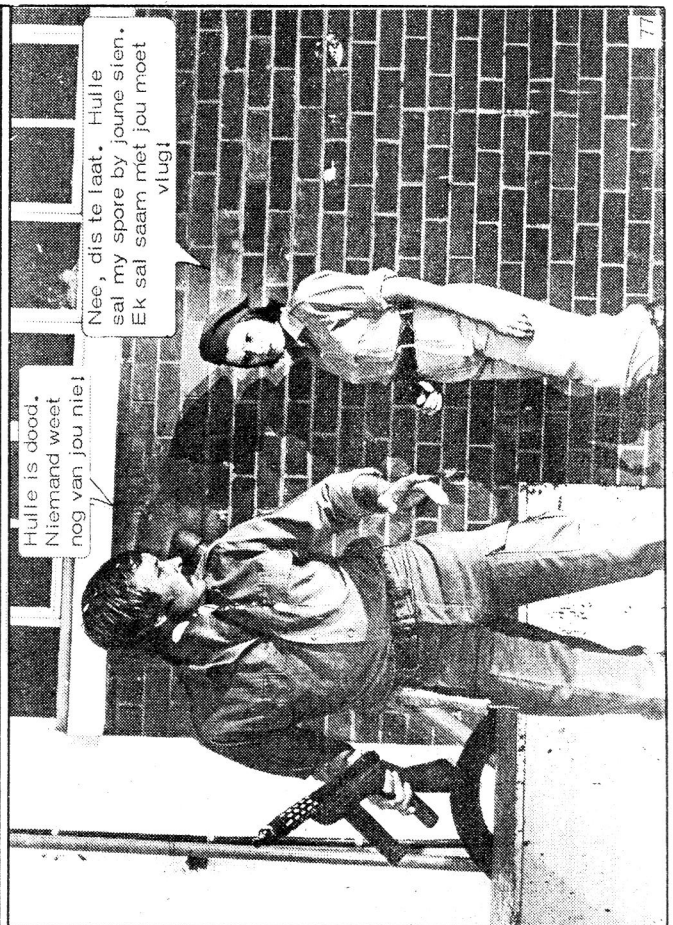


DIE WAG SKRIK.
HY HET OPDRAG
OM TE SORG DAT
VEGTER NIKS
GEDURENDE DIE
NAG OORKOM NIE.

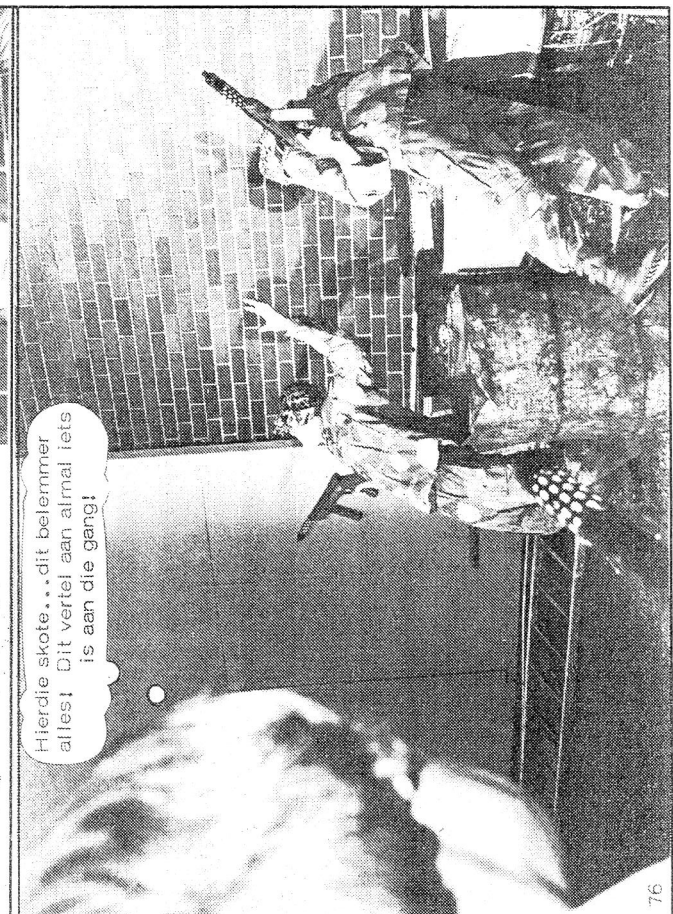
Dis seker van al die slae
wat hy verdur het... hy
het sy bewussyn herwin
... en nou voel hy die pyn.





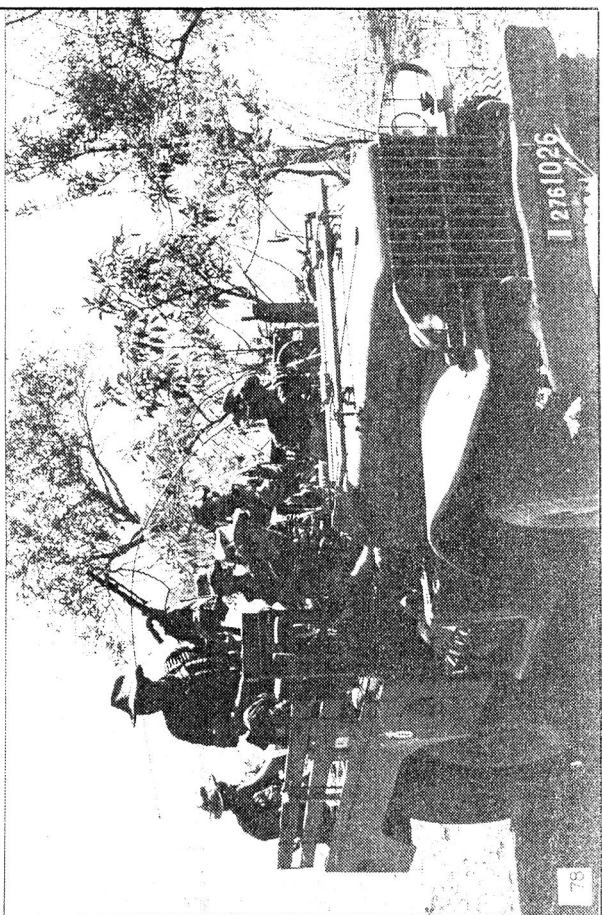


Nee, dis te laat. Hulle sal my spore by joune sien. Ek sal saam met jou moet vlug!

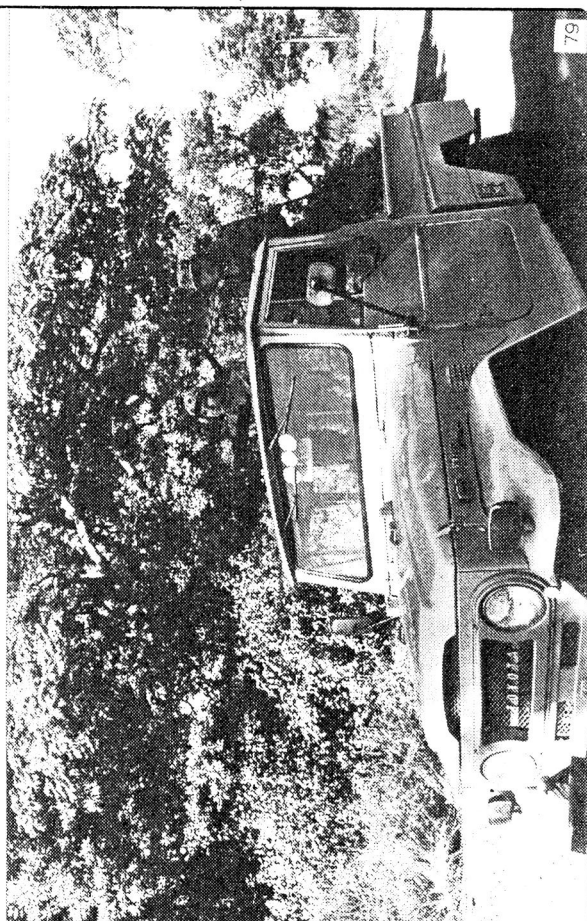


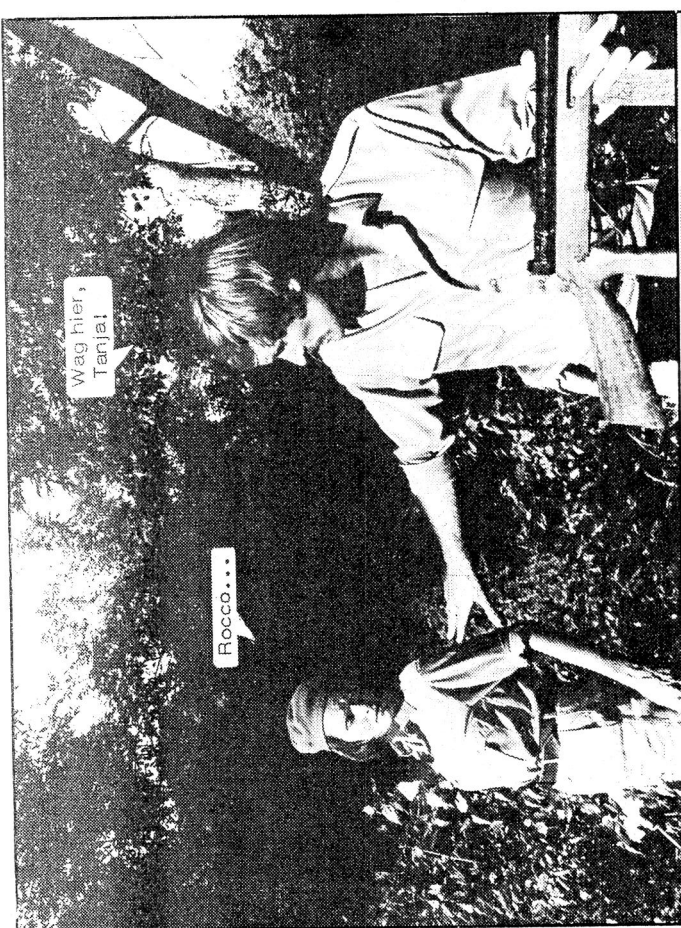


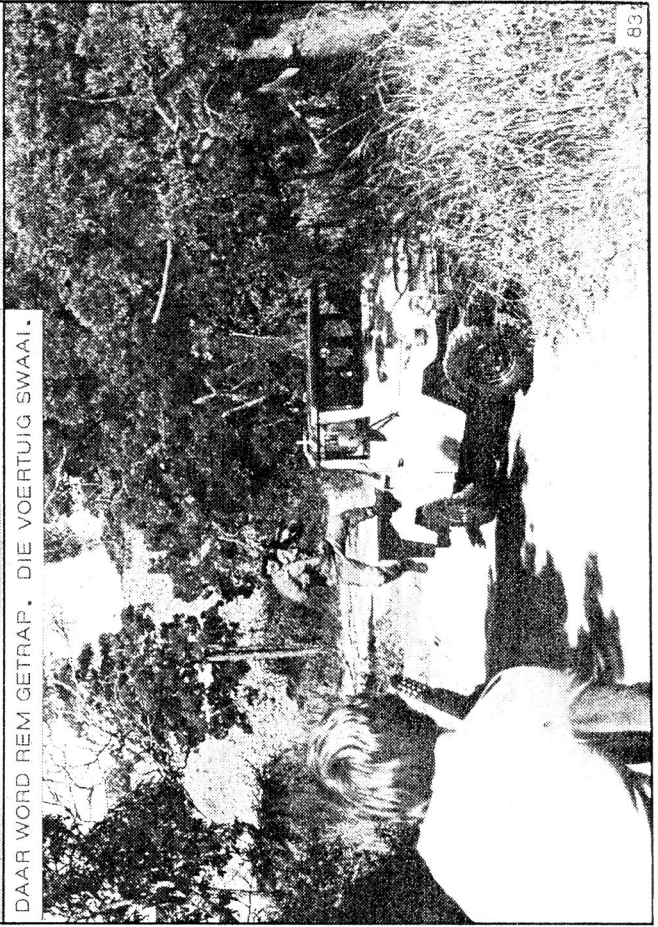
DIE GEDREUN VAN VOERTUIG E VOL TROEPE ONDERBREEK HUL GESPREK.
DIE DUIDELIK DAT 'N GROOTSKEEPSE SOEKTOG NA HULLE BEGIN HET.

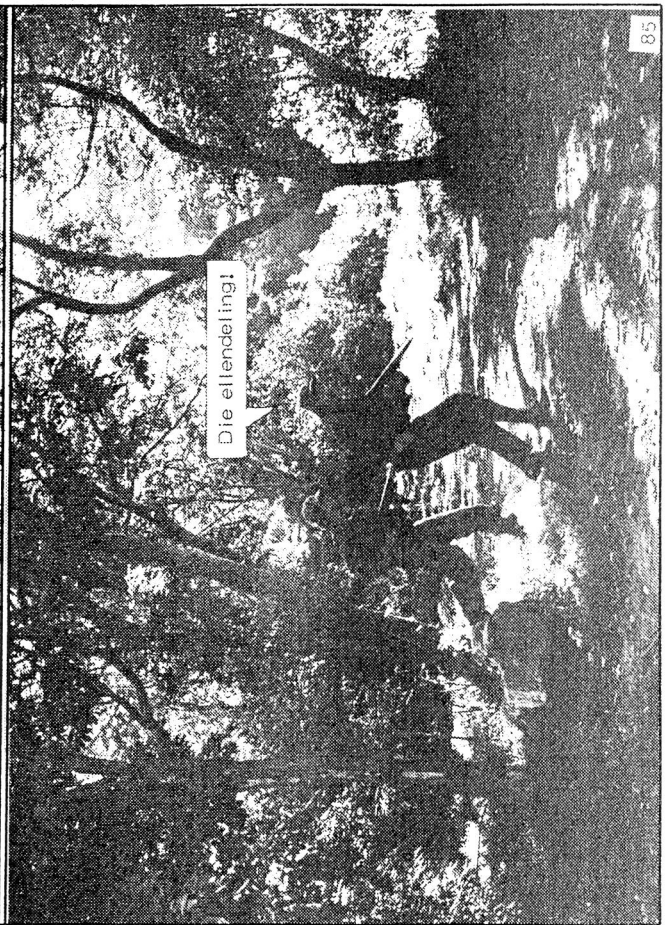


HULLE VLUG VERDER, VERDER TERWYL 'N UUR, TWEE UUR VERLOOP.
DAN KLINK DIE GEDREUN VAN EEN VOERTUIG OP.

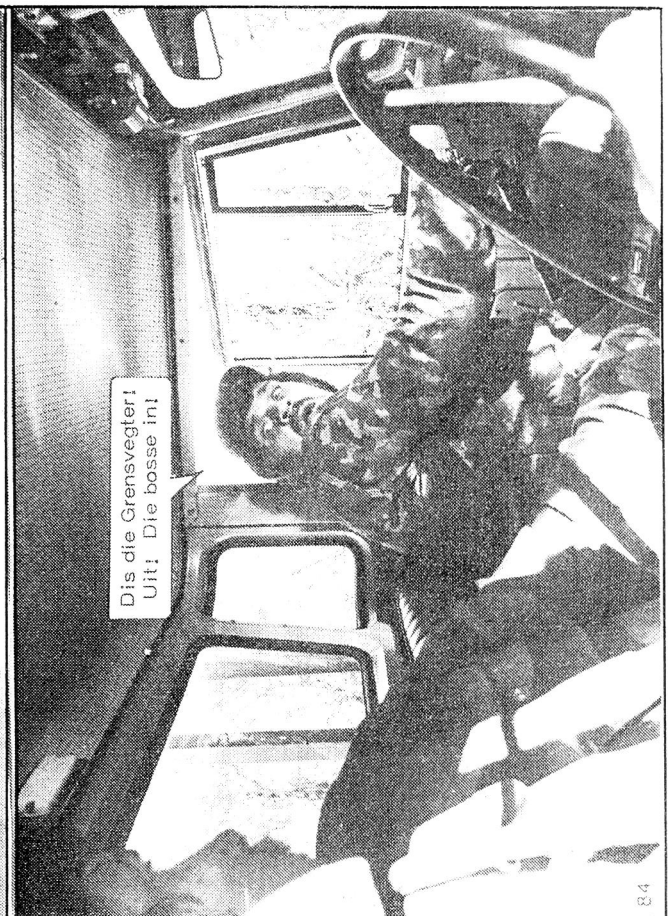




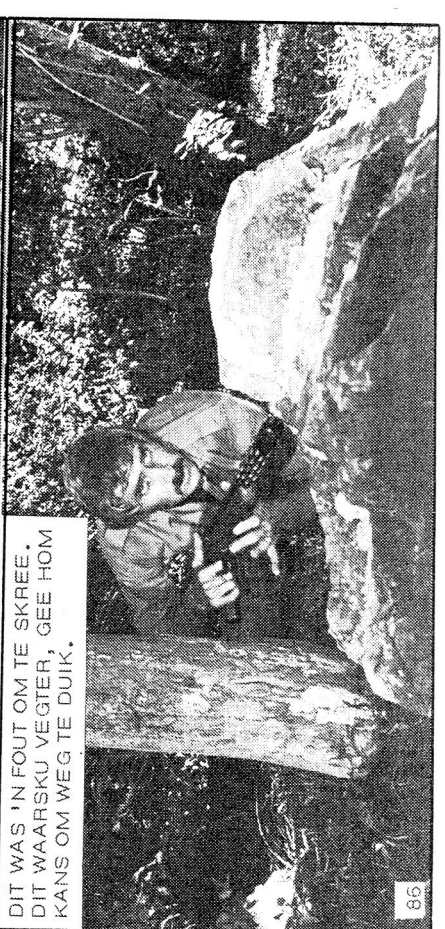
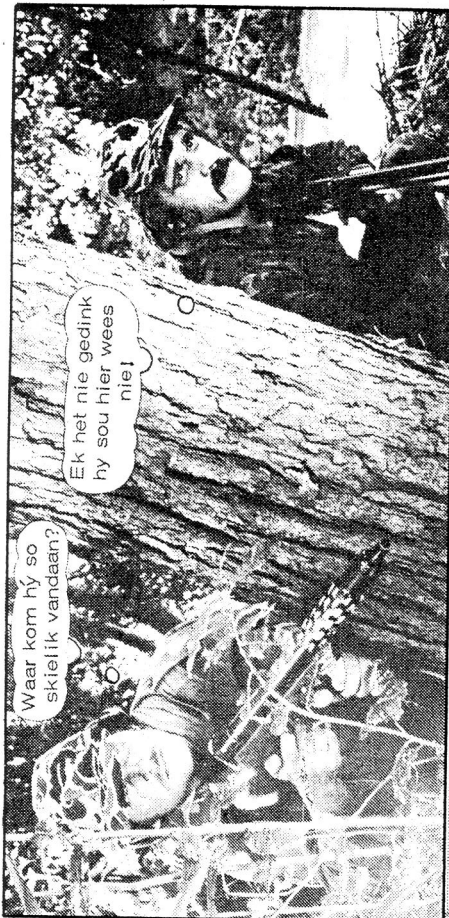
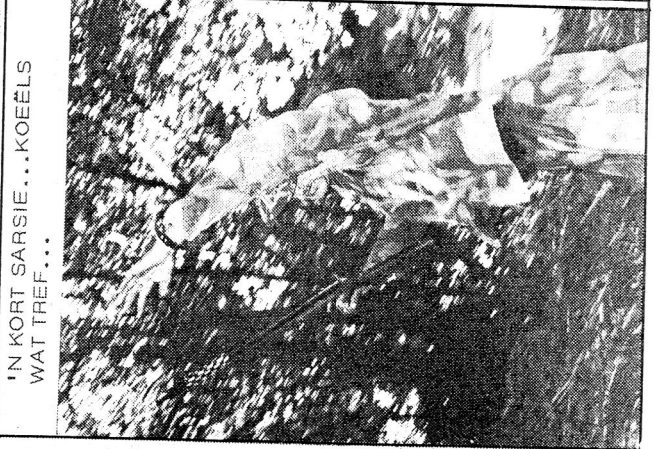
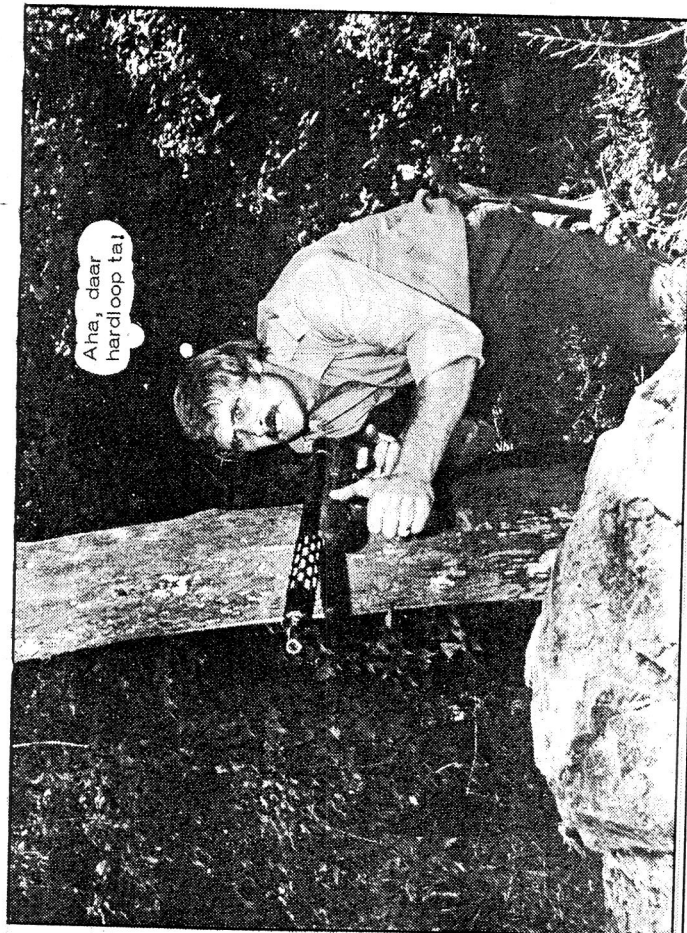




85

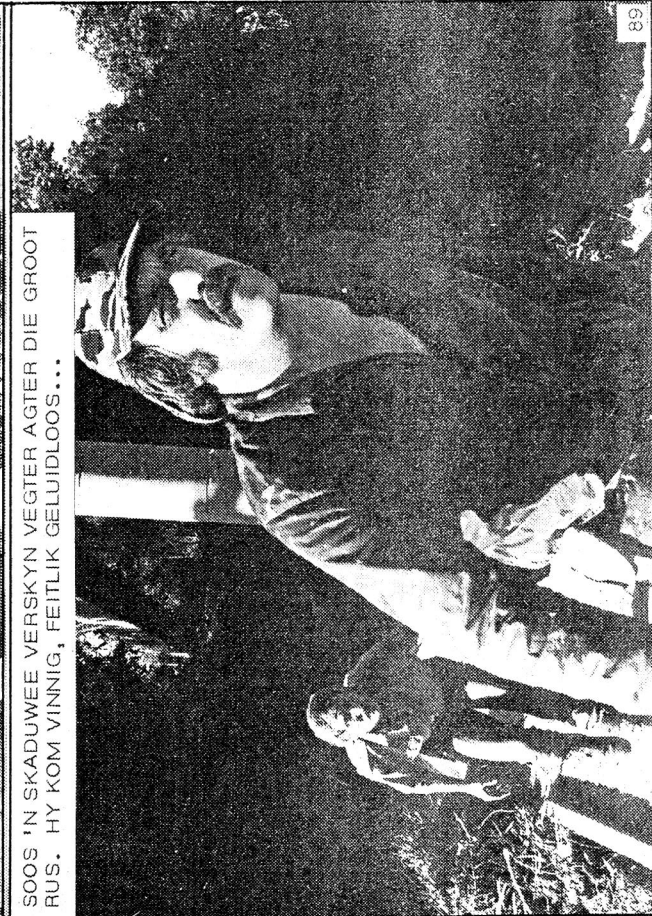


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SOOS 'N SKADUWEE VERSKYN VEGTER AGTER DIE GROOT RUS. HY KOM VINNIG, FEITLIK GELUIDLOOS...



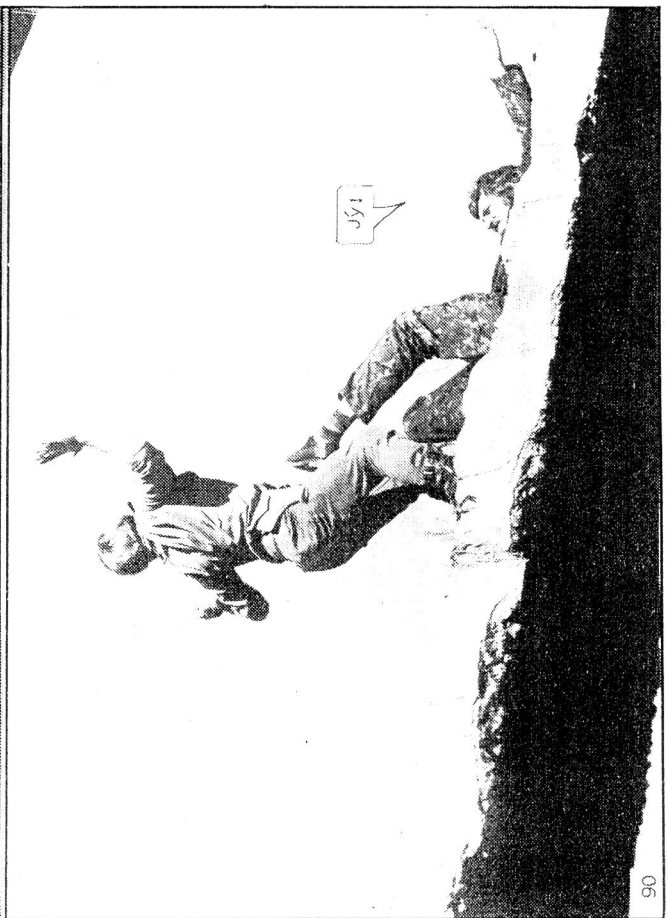
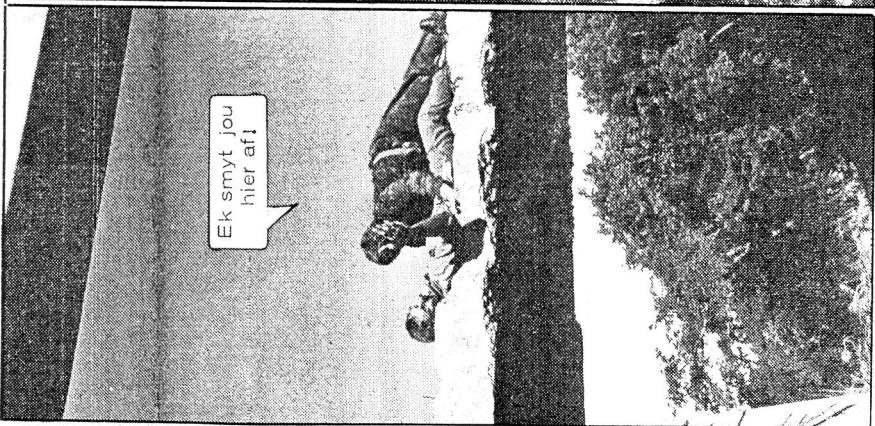
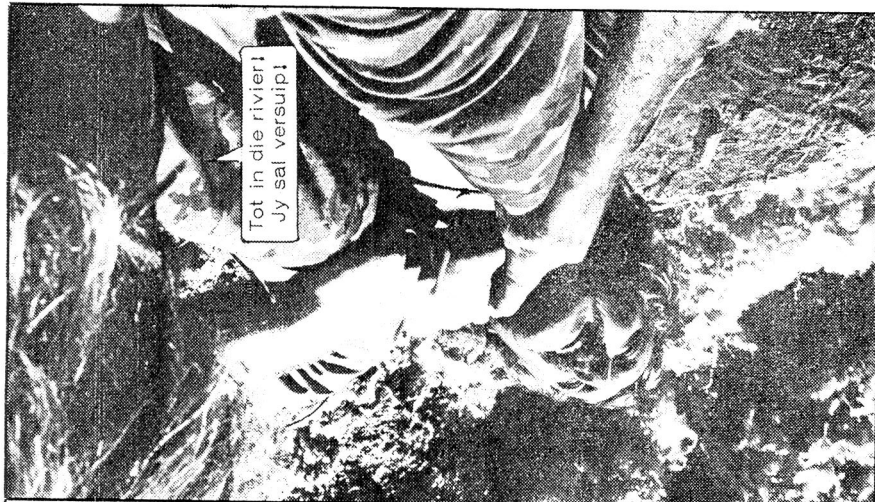
89

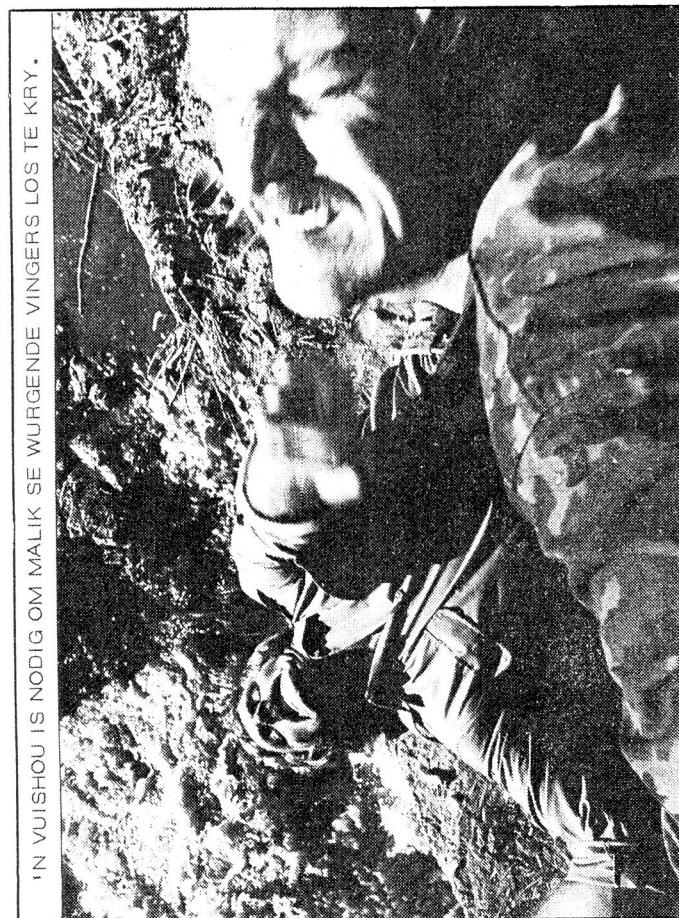


MALIK VLUG.



88



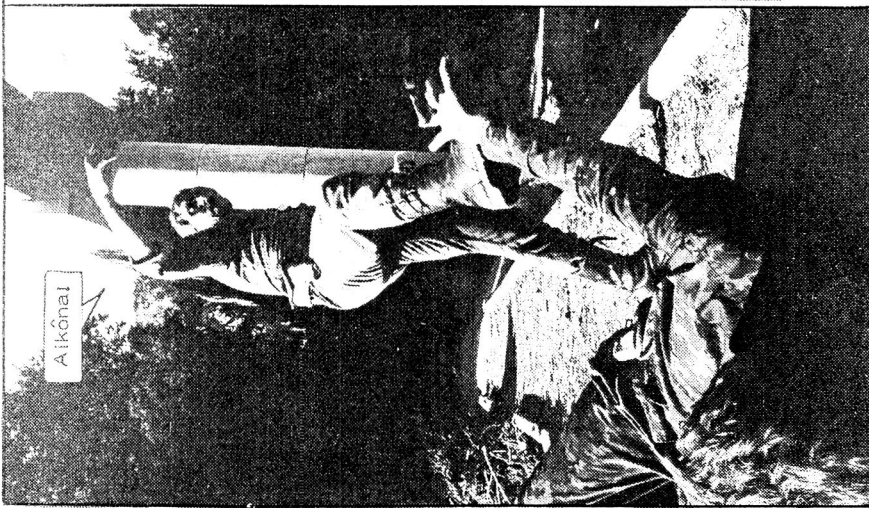


'N VUISHOU IS NODIG OM MALIK SE WURGENTE VINGERS LOS TE KRY.

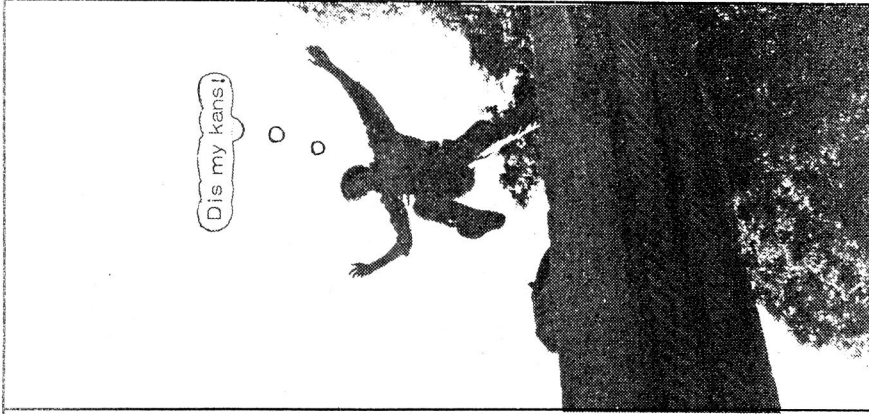


Nou... ek sal moet gou speel... my binneste is weer aan die brand na wat hulle aan my gedoen het.

My pistool!



Aikônal



Dis my kans!



Hy's half bewusteloos.

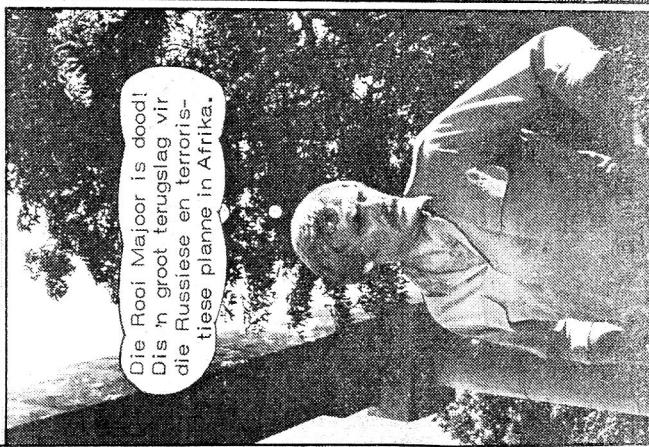


Oft sal met
hom klaar-
speel.

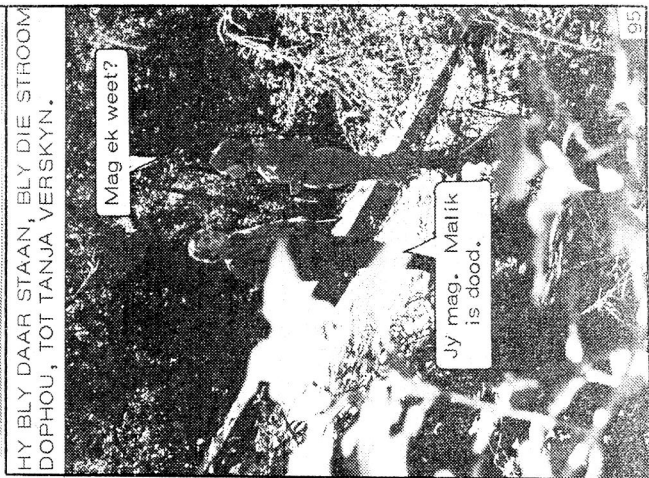
MALIK VERLOOR SY EWEWIG. HY
KANTEL OOR DIE BRUG... ONDER
RAAS EN BRUIS DIE STROOM...



Daar is geen moontlikheid
dat hy lewendig hieruit sal
kom nie.

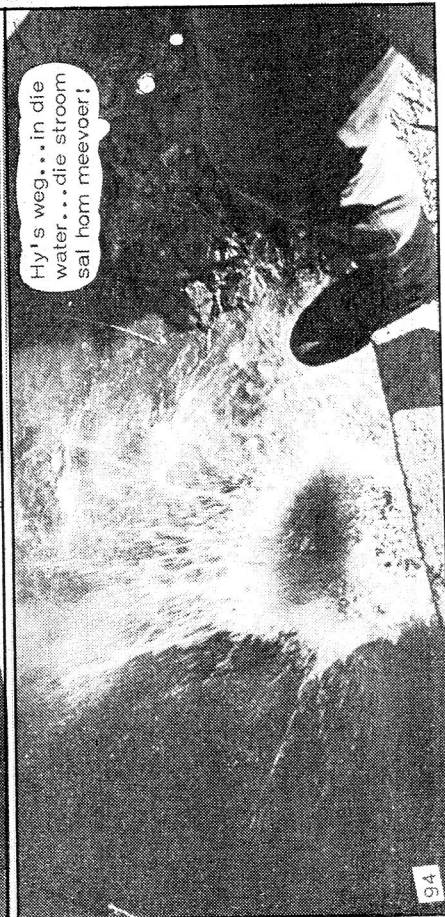


Die Rooi Majoor is dood!
Dis 'n groot terugslag vir
die Russiese en terroris-
tiese planne in Afrika.



Mag ek weet?

Jy mag. Malik
is dood.



Hy's weg... in die
water... die stroom
sal hom meevoer!



Ek sou jou kon lief-
kry, groot man...



Ek weet nie of ons mekaar
ooit weer sal sien nie, Rocco
...maar wat ek wel weet, is
...ek sal jou altyd onthou!
Altyd!

97



Hy is die laaste een
wat sou geweet het...
dat ek by jou is.

Dis reg. Maar waar-
om sê jy dit?



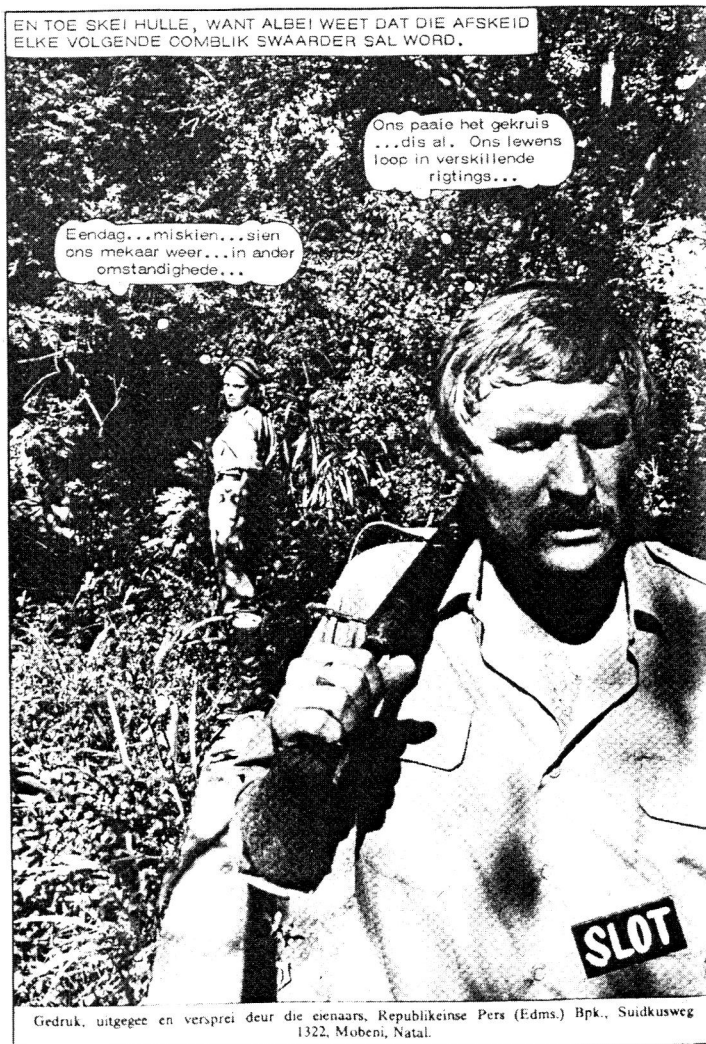
Ek kan terugkeer na
Moedertjie Rusland.
Ek kan daar by 'n
versetgroep teen die
kommunistiese be-
wind aansluit...

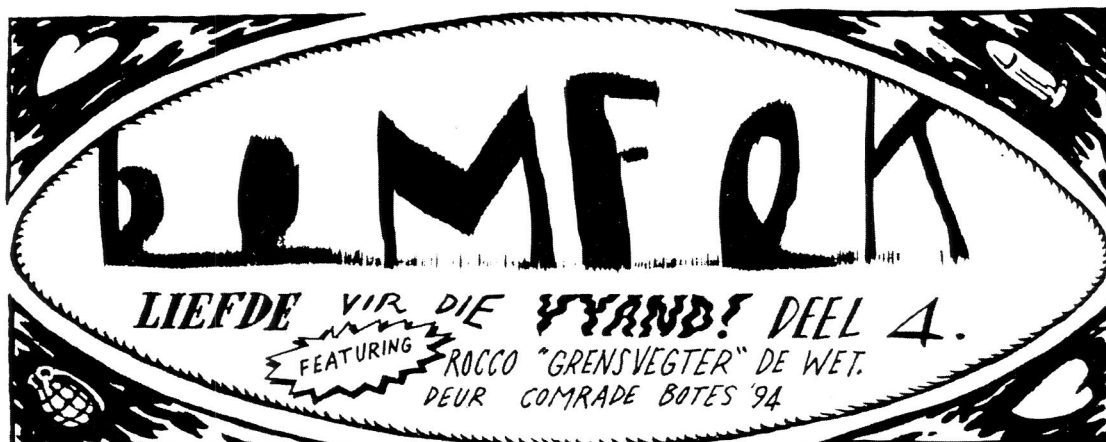


My aanbod staan. Jy kan
saam Suid-Afrika toe.

Ek sê weer... baie dankie,
dierbare man. Maar ek weet
nou wat my taak en plig is.

96





IEWERS IN DIE RUGTES VAN NOORD ANGOLA IS ROCCO DE WET VAN DIE SUID-AFRIKAANSE WEERMAG OP DIE SPOOR VAN 'N BENDE KUBAANSE DROSTERS...

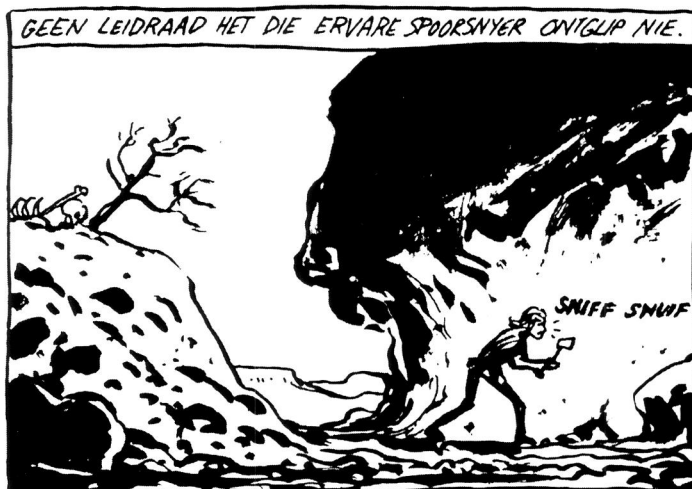


HULLE HET 'N DIAMANTMYN NABY KARRABURG BEROOF EN HET DIE MYN-EIENAAR SE DOGTER ONTVOER.



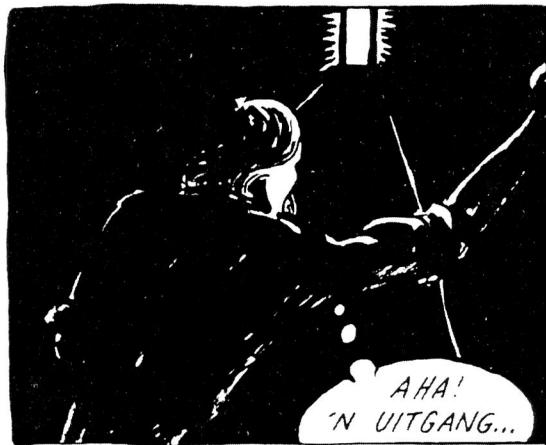
DIE MEISIE IS 'N GOEIE VRIENDIN VAN DIE HOOF VAN DIE SUID-AFRIKAANSE WEERMAG, GENERAAL BLOKKIE VISSER.

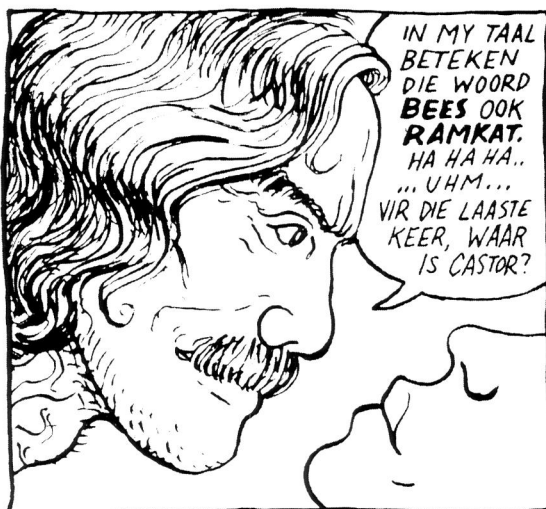






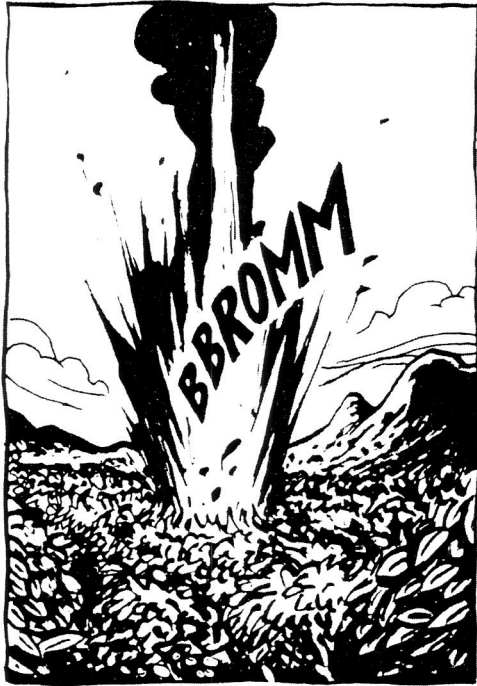




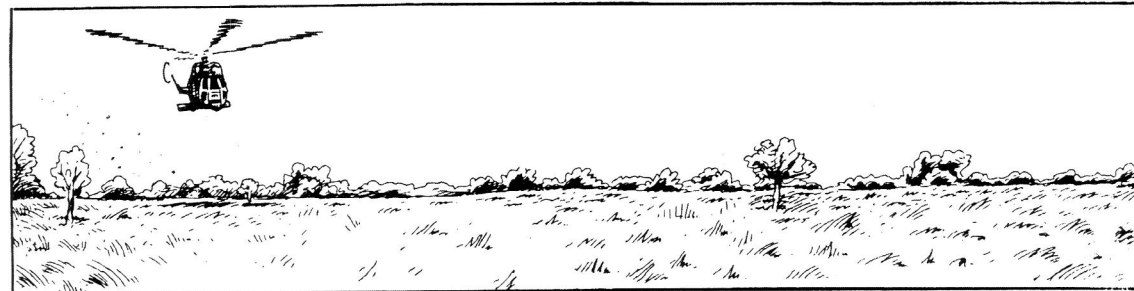
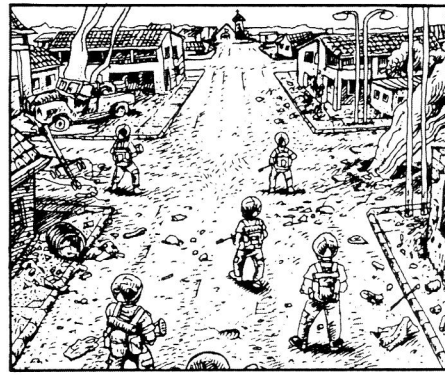


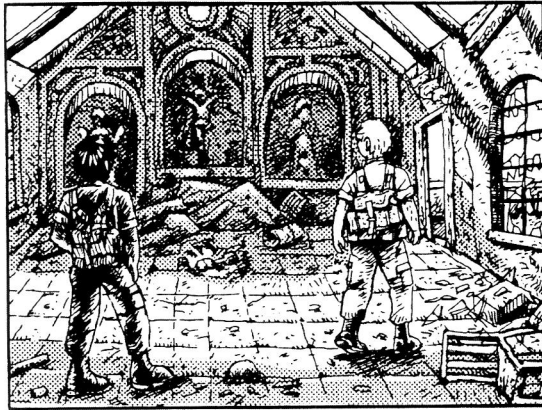
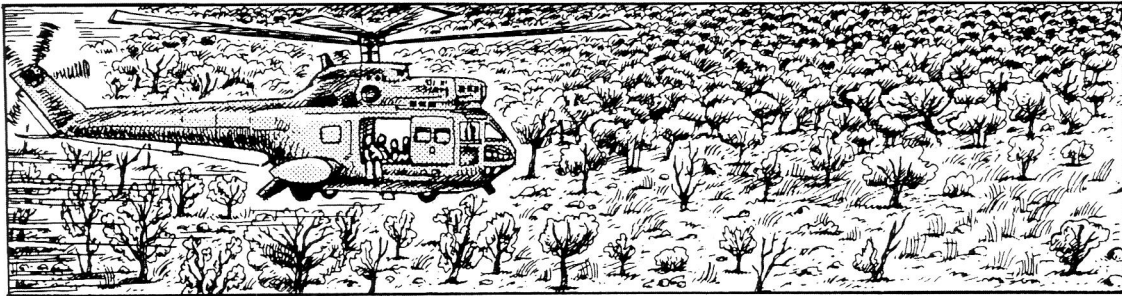


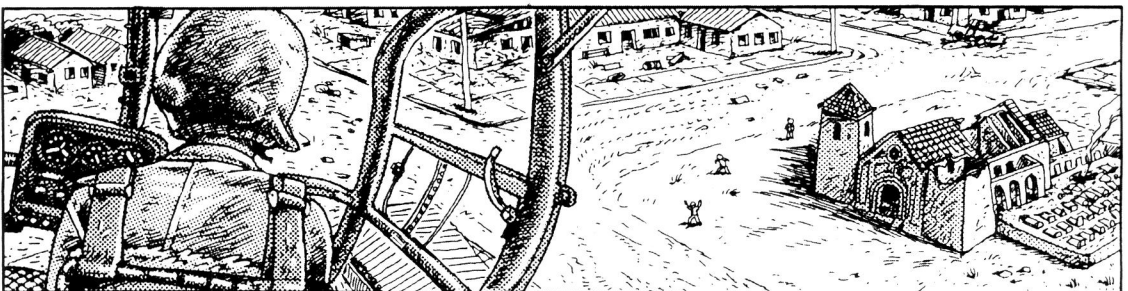
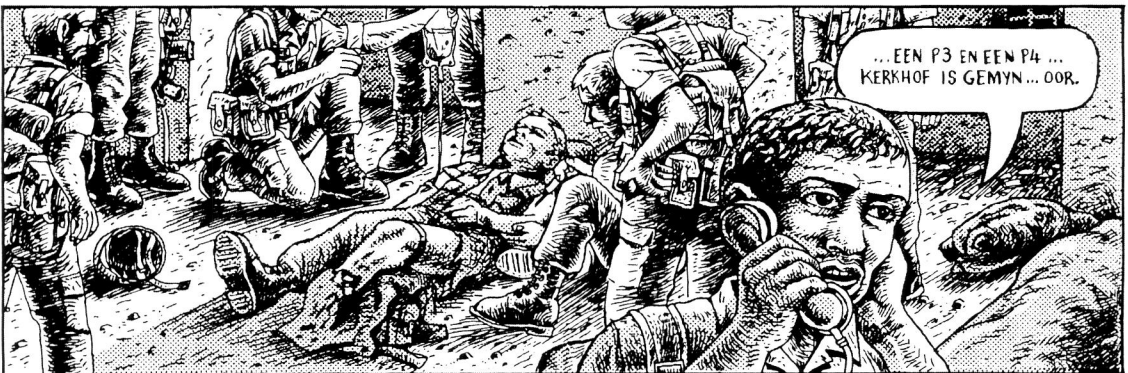
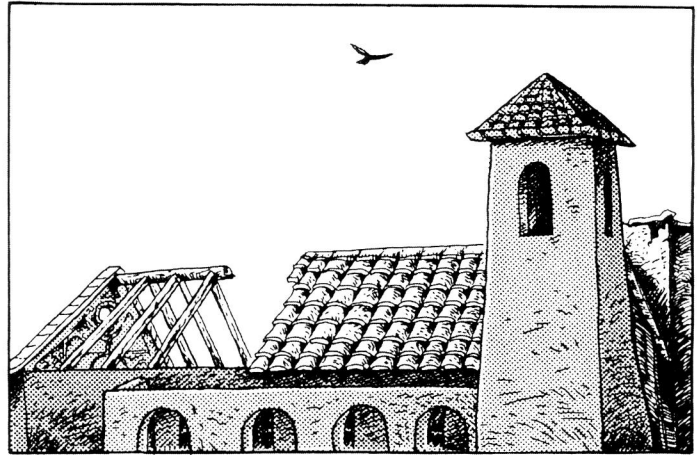


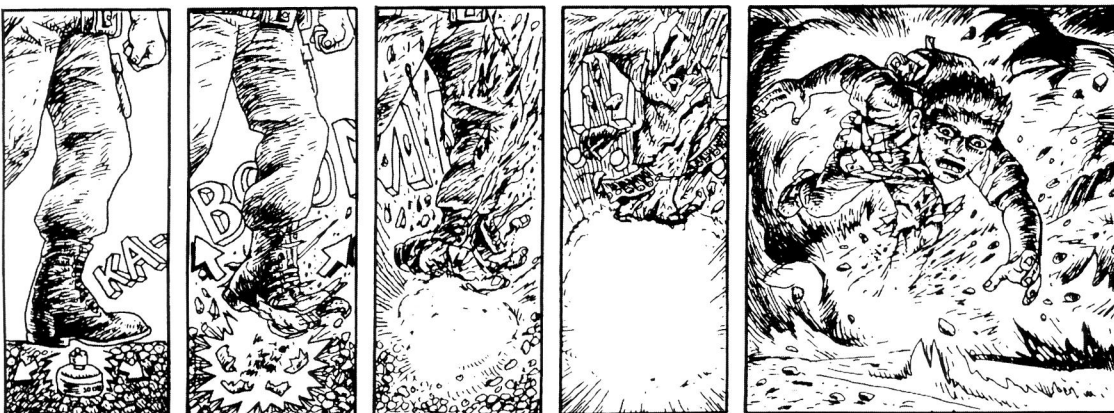
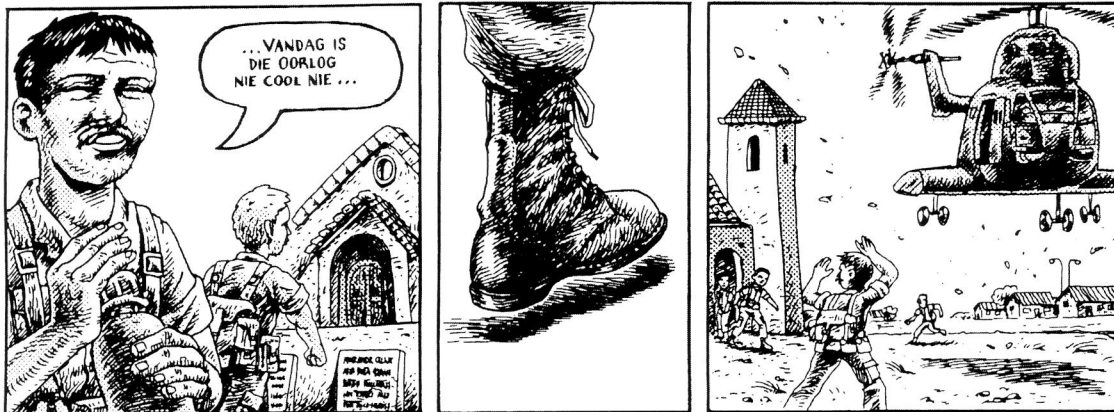


so stil soos 'n LANDMYN daan en tienie



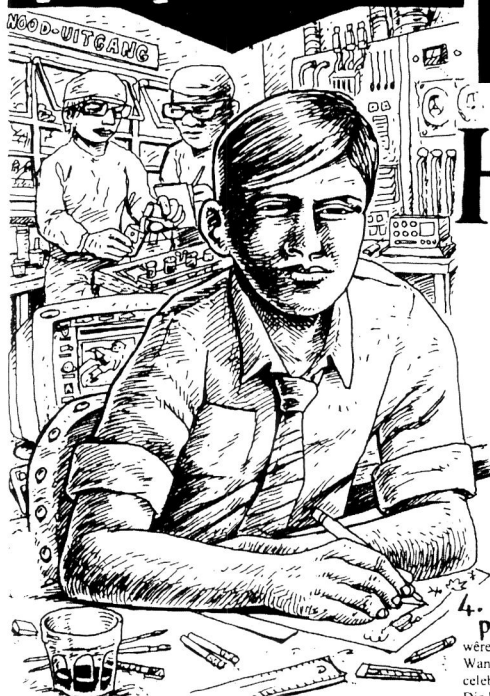






LEES OOK: "THE DEVIL'S GARDENS - A HISTORY OF LANDMINES" DEUR MONIN EN GALLIMORE (PIMLICO, 2002)

Die Bitterkomix- speurspan op die beat



LANDMYNE

Het U geweet?

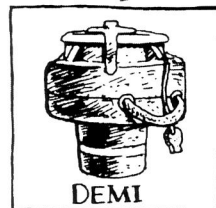
1. Dat daar steeds sowat 1miljoen landmyne onder die grond in Angola lê? OK, daar is ook 'n 400 000 syfer genoem (die HALO-trust* se berekening). Volgens die Bitterkomix-speurspan 'n meer geloofwaardige aanname, maar die 'heart-break stories' van die NGO-tannies in Engeland en die V.S.A. maak beter 'head-line copy'. 600 000 minder landmyne is seker iets waar om hulle hulle koppe nie kan kry nie.

2. Dat jou pa of jou oom dalk gedeeltelik hiervoor verantwoordelik kan wees? 'n Sekere lid van die Bitterkomix-speurspan was wel destyds in Angola, maar ons kan dit hier duidelik stel dat hy nie 'n mynplanter was nie (om die waarheid te sê hy wou net die fok uit die army uit kom). Maar iemand het ons landmyne gesaai. Kom nou manne, wees eerlik, wie het dit gedoen? Moenie vir my vertel dat dit UNITA was nie – wie het hulle geleer om kak aan te jaag?

3. Dat meer as 70 verskillende soorte landmyne in Angola gebruik is? Myne van 22 lande is reeds in Angola gevind. In die sowat 10 000 mynvelde (omtrek 700 van hulle skoon gevee sedert 1995) lê daar myne van Suid-Afrika, Italië, Amerika, die ou Sowjet Unie-lande, Kuba, Frankryk, Korea, Sjina, Kanada en so gaan dit aan – hoe tegnologiese toestelle tot plofstof in 'home-made' houtkassies. 'n Regte mengeldrankie.

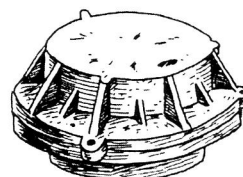
4. Dat die oproep om 'n verbod op myne slegs riem-ruk 'by proxy' is? Ná die Tweede Wêreldoorlog was daar meer myne in Europa as wat nou in die hele wêreld lê. Al hierdie myne is binne 10 jaar gelig. Maar Afrika dra nie dieselfde gewig as Europa nie. Wanneer 'n myn in Angola ontplof? ... people campaign for a ban and go to conferences instead, and get celebrities involved ... that's how we deal with the problem when it's not in our own backyard." Die bliksems wat die myne gemaak het voel 'n fok vir Afrika, laat ek jou vertel.

5. Dat die landmyne wat in Angola gebruik was tegnologies innoverend was?



DEMI

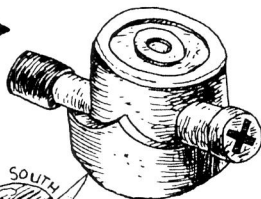
Hier blink Suid-Afrika weereens uit. Ons eie DEMI (Device Electronic Mine Initiator) is 'n "intelligente" elektroniese ontstekers met magnetiese en seismiese sensors. Die DEMI word onder AT-landmyne geplaas en ontsteek sonder direkte kontak met 'n voertuig. Verskuiwing, beweging of magnetiese sturing sal outomatiese insiëring ontken. Kan wel deur myn-verklikers opgespoor word, maar die opsporing sal 'n ontploffing veroorsaak. Myne gekoppel aan die toestel kan nie geneutraliseer of ontwapen word nie. Ons het ook – onder andere – 'n oulike klein "toe-popper" ontwikkel (sien illustrasie).



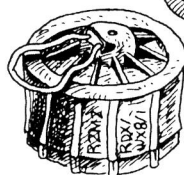
PPM-2 ←
Teen-personeel
Ou Oos-Duitsland
63mm hoog
25mm deursnee
Weeg 371g
Sensitiwiteit:
11-15 kg drukking

"TOE-POPPER" →

Teen-personeel
Suid-Afrika
36mm hoog
41mm deursnee
Weeg 20g
Sensitiwiteit:
5-7 kg drukking



PPMZ-2 →
Teen-personeel
Ou Sowjet Unie
135mm lank
60mm wyd
weeg 2 kg
Sensitiwiteit:
1-5 kg trekkrag



R2M2 ←
Teen-personeel
Suid-Afrika
57mm hoog
69mm deursnee
weeg 128g
Sensitiwiteit:
3-7 kg drukking

6. Dat dit sowat R40 kos om 'n landmyn te vervaardig en ongeveer R4000 kos om dit te verwyder?

Die skoonmaak van mynevelde in ontwikkelende lande word steeds hoofsaaklik deur hand- arbeid gedoen. 'n Span van twee kan hoogstens 50 vierkante meter per dag beveilig.

HALO-trust (Hazardous Areas Life-Support Organisation): nie-politieke, nie-godsdienstige NGO. Weier om politieke betrokke te raak by die veldtog om landmyne te verbied of om konferensies by te woon. Volgens José Pedro Agostinho van HALO in Angola, het hulle opnames gedoen in amper 500 mynvelde in drie provinsies. Elke mynveld het gemiddeld 36 landmyne bevat (dus hulle beraming van 400 000 landmyne wat rond lê).

daan + tienie 2004